

*SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH TESTIMONIAL
PREACHING*

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CHRISTINE WRIGHT
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ABSTRACT

Growing up in the Black Church allowed me to experience one of its most cherished practices, which is the practice of testimony. At the beginning of every worship service, bible study or business meeting was a time of singing, prayer and testimony. The person leading the devotion would let the congregation know that anyone who desires to give their testimony could do so in their own way. The time of testimony was a powerful time. It served as a strengthening agent for believers and an evangelical ministry for unbelievers.

This thesis-project was heavily influenced by my church's practice of testimony. After laying a theological foundation for testimony, this thesis-project is designed to assist preachers in preaching clear biblical sermons in which they incorporate personal faith stories. As a result of incorporating faith stories in sermons one would be engaging in a legitimate method to communicate the Gospel. By bringing together the proclamation of God's Word with a testimony of a personal experience of God allows for a mighty strong witness of the Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In this chapter the importance of the project and the purpose of the project are stated. This chapter also includes the definitions of key terms that are important to the study.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death.

-Revelation 12:11

This project in particular will explore how one can incorporate their personal testimony in a sermon. Christian testimonies are the true stories told by believers about what God has done and is doing in their lives. Christian stories are indeed relevant. One's life can be transformed, even unto eternity, by the Christian testimony that bears witness to the work of the one and only living God in our lives.

There is indeed an extreme measure of urgency in sharing our Christian faith because this is the appointed time for men and

women to be reconciled with God through the only means by which reconciliation come, which is through Jesus Christ. The time will come; which has not been revealed to the world, in which this appointed time for the lost to receive salvation will cease. Therefore the believers must strive to share their faith with as many people as possible and as often as possible.

The ultimate work of Jesus Christ in reference to humankind is salvation. Salvation indeed is derived from the Truth and reality of the person f the Living God, Jesus Christ. The one who is in covenant relationship with God and receives on-going knowledge of Jesus Christ is compelled through the Word of God to share their experiences with Him to the world.

Both Old Testament and New Testament Scripture consistently give emphasis in reference to the people of God being called by God to be His “witnesses.”¹ Scripture reveals that through the Christian testimony God is glorified. When God is glorified, men and women can see that it is indeed God, and God alone, who carries the burdens of all that is, that was, and that which is to come, and He alone, should be worshipped and praised.

¹ See Isaiah 43:10, 12; 44:8, Luke 24:48, Acts 1:8; 2:32; 10:39-43, 2 Timothy 1:8, Hebrew 12:1, Rev 6:9; 12:11, 19:10.

In light of the aforementioned, the believers of Jesus Christ cannot afford to ignore their responsibility to carry out the commission of sharing the most important news this world has ever known. The people of God must challenge themselves on every level to consciously set a place to bear witness to their experiences with God. One way Christians can participate in the urgent work of salvation is by sharing their personal experiences with God to the world as often as they can. Sharing your personal testimony may not only lead one to receive salvation, but it can also serve to encourage the body of Christ.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The title of this thesis project is “Spreading the Gospel through Testimonial Preaching.” The goal of this research project is to allow preachers to set a place in their preaching to not only bear witness to what God is saying in the Scriptures, but to also bear witness to God’s actions through Christ in their personal life. Developing and teaching a model that will assist preachers in incorporating their testimonies within their sermons will achieve the goal of this research project.

There are several methods that will be used in the course of this thesis. In Chapter Two I will engage in theological reflections in support of Christian testimony that will lay a biblical foundation for testimonial preaching. In Chapter Three I will identify, summarize, and analyze literature that relate to this project in terms of content and methodology. Furthermore, after conducting interviews with various preachers to gain their input concerning research questions that I have developed and upon studying similar research conducted by other authors, I will develop a curriculum in Chapter Four. The course will be divided into five sections and will be taught to a small group of preachers in an interactive setting. The outcome of the course is the preachers will be able to preach a sermon in which they will incorporate come aspect of their testimony. In Chapter Five I will include a summary of the teaching experience. Additionally, I will also interpret feedback gained from students concerning their overall experience for evaluative purposes.

In summary, this disciplined inquiry is certainly one that finds reference in Scripture, therefore lending itself to clear and definable research. The end product will be a theological work that is beneficial to spreading the Gospel.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The following terms are defined as to provide clarity during the course of this thesis project:

WITNESSES

Believers of Jesus Christ are called to be witnesses. A Christian witness shows and tells what they have seen and what they know. They offer an account of how God has moved on their behalf and transformed their life.

PREACHING

Preaching is proclaiming the truth as it is established in the word of God. Preaching occurs when the chosen vessel of God allow the Holy Spirit to guide them in exposing the biblical text and making it relevant to the hearer. Responsible biblical preaching requires one to study and research the scriptures to gain a proper context.

CHRISTIAN TESTIMONIES

A Christian testimony is a true story of God's action in one's personal life or an account of what being a Christian means in a

personal way. A Christian testimony “may be told in a few words or many. It may include background information relevant to the circumstances of the experience.”²

GOSPEL

The English translation of the Greek euangelion, means “good news.” In the New Testament, it refers to the good news preached by Jesus that the kingdom of God is at hand and the good news of what God has done on behalf of humanity in Christ.³

TESTIMONIAL PREACHING

Testimonial preaching is defined as the incorporation of Christian testimonies with biblical preaching. The biblical text and the interpretation thereof, is the primary force that comprises the biblical message that is delivered. The personal testimony of the preacher is secondary and is incorporated in the sermon. The testimony serves as further evidence of God through Jesus Christ who is at work in the world.

² Neville, Joyce. *How To Share Your Faith Without Being Offensive*. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979) 10.

³ Achtemeier, Paul, J. *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996) 385.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor. Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world- like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. In the same way, let your deeds shine out for all to see, that everyone will praise your heavenly father.

- Mathew 5:13-16

Witnessing is at the heart of the life of a Christian. Once one has uncovered the theological basis for witnessing, the “Christian life without witnessing hardly seems Christian and hardly seems like life.”⁴ The purpose of this chapter is to lay the foundation for Christian testimonies as set forth in the Word of God.

The first section “Old Testament Perspective” discusses God’s election of Israel to be His witnesses. This section explores the impact God intended Israel to have on the world because of their election. The second section “New Testament Perspective” offers a theological basis for witnessing as set forth in the New Testament. This section expresses that God’s promised Messiah who was

⁴ Woodburn, Chad. *The Gift of Evangelism Workshop*, 2003.

foretold in the Old Testament has come and has called all of His followers to be witnesses to God's saving power and grace. In sections three and four two key factors for witnessing are stated, and examples of various biblical witnesses taken from the Old and New Testament Scripture are documented.

OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

The Old Testament is part of God's magnificent plan for salvation and redemption of mankind. This section discusses God's election of Israel to be His witnesses. It also explores the impact God intended Israel to have on the world because of their election.

ISRAEL CALLED TO BE GOD'S WITNESSES

God ordained His chosen people (Israel) to attest that He alone is God. Israel was elected by God to be witnesses to His splendor and sovereign authority over the nations. The Lord God of Israel makes Himself known through His words and mighty acts so that all might know that He is the only true God.

The people of Israel experienced God's deliverance evidenced by such events as the Passover and the miraculous crossing through the Red Sea. Though the people of Israel failed to

honor God through their frequent acts of disobedience, God's divine plan for them to be His witnesses remains. Isaiah Chapter 43 verses 10-13 declares:

*You are my witnesses, declares the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He. Before Me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior. I have revealed and saved and proclaimed- I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses, declares the LORD, that I am God. Yes, and from ancient days I am He. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?*⁵

God chose Israel because they were least among the nations and because He loved them. Deuteronomy Chapter 7 verses 7-8 tells us,

*The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*⁶

God's plan for Israel was that they would go and teach others about Him. Israel was to be a nation of priest, prophets, and missionaries to the world. In Exodus Chapter 19 verses 5-6 God declares to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai,

⁵ See also Isaiah 44:8, 55:4, 41:4, 44:6.

⁶ See also Deuteronomy 4:37, 10:22.

*Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priest and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.*⁷

God not only chose Israel as His “servant,” but He also chose Israel to be the people through whom Jesus Christ would be born. God did not have to elect a nation of people to participate in carrying out His purpose, but He chose Israel through his inexplicable sovereign power and grace. In light of this, Jeremiah Chapter 23 verses 5-6 declare:

*Behold, in the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*⁸

While Israel’s election is sure, the Messianic figure that is foretold in the Old Covenant will not only allow Israel, but also Gentiles to praise God upon experiencing the blessings of redemption and restoration. To this effect, Isaiah Chapter 43 verses 19-21 reads:

Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor me,

⁷ See also Leviticus 19:2, Deuteronomy 7:5-6, 14:2, 26:18-19.

⁸ Jeremiah 23:5-6.

*the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.*⁹

When people serve as a witness they are in effect praising God. God's chosen people Israel are called by God to declare His praise “...so that sinners of the Gentiles, who had been as wild animals, running wild, fierce as [dragons], stupid as the owls, shall be brought to honor God for His grace.”¹⁰

ISRAEL'S CALL TO BE WITNESSES AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

A central theme of the Old Testament is that God, the creator of all things who is holy and righteous, desires to have a loving and intimate relationship with mankind.¹¹ By Israel serving as God's witnesses, they are in effect serving as God's instruments that will allow the nations to “know” God.¹² It is God's desire that all that He has created know Him in such an intimate way that they will understand and acknowledge that He is the only true and living God

⁹ Isaiah 43:19-21.

¹⁰ Mathew Henry Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 920.

¹¹ See Genesis 3:8-9, Deuteronomy 5:9-10, 7:9-16, 11:1, 11:13-32, Psalm 91:14-16, Isaiah 44:21-23, Jeremiah 3:22, 4:12, 15:19, Hosea 6:1.

¹² See Isaiah 43:10-13, 20.

and it is only through His sovereign plan that they can escape “The Day of the Lord” that is foretold.

“The Day of the Lord” (day of Yahweh) is the expression, among other things, of judgment in the Old Testament.¹³ The Day of the Lord is the appointed time in the future when God will intervene in history for the purpose of judging the wicked and upholding the righteous.¹⁴

The expression, “The Day of the Lord” is used 16 times in the Prophetic Books.¹⁵ There are other phrases that signify the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is called “great,” “a day of trouble,” “day of wrath,” and “a day of darkness and gloom.” Zephaniah Chapter 1 verses 1-17 reads:

*The great day of the LORD is near – near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD.*¹⁶

¹³ Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary. (Nashville: Holman Publishers, 1998) 966.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See also Joel 2:11, 31, Malachi 4:5.

Further, The Day of the Lord is called “a day of earthquake;”¹⁷ “a day of battle;”¹⁸ “a day of vengeance;”¹⁹ and “a day of fire.”²⁰ God’s wrath on that day will be like both a consuming fire to the wicked and a refining fire to the righteous. Isaiah Chapter 4 verse 1-3 declares:

Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire, says the LORD Almighty. Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things, says the LORD Almighty.²¹

While the Day of the Lord is inevitable, The Lord has indeed provided a means for escaping His judgment through the Messianic figure who is foretold.²² Additionally, although Israel is flawed on many levels, God has a special plan and purpose for them. God uses Israel as a result of His covenant with them to influence the nations to come to know Him as the only True God and Savior. Isaiah 49 verse 6 declares:

It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I

¹⁷ Isaiah 2:12-22.

¹⁸ Zechariah 14:3.

¹⁹ Jeremiah 46:10, Isaiah 63:4.

²⁰ Joel 2:30.

²¹ See also Isaiah 10:16-18, Ezekiel 15:6-8, 22:31, Malachi 3:2-3.

²² See Isaiah 53.

*will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.*²³

God's will for mankind is not for them to be separated from Him, but for them to be in perfect fellowship with Him. Thus, God not only uses Israel to help restore the unfaithful tribes of Israel, but He also plans to use Israel to serve as His witnesses in the world so that the nations may also receive the hope of being saved from eternally separation from God on the Great Day of the Lord. God uses Israel's way of life as set forth in the law and their testimony of God's mighty acts towards them to allow the nations to get a glimpse of who He is and what He requires.

NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

The following section offers a theological basis for witnessing as set forth in the New Testament. This section express that God's promised Messiah who was foretold in the Old Testament has come and has called all of His followers to be witnesses to God's saving power and grace.

²³ Isaiah 49:6.

JESUS PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign LORD, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

-Luke 2:25-32

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

The New Testament represents the dawn of a new era. In Luke Chapter 2 verses 25-32, the child Jesus is presented in the temple. Jesus, the Son of God, is the Messiah that was foretold in the Old Covenant who has come to inaugurate the New Kingdom. The New Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus brings salvation and new life to all that believe on Him and ultimately brings the powers and forces of the kingdom of Satan to destruction. Jesus fulfills that ministry through a ministry of vicarious service and suffering.²⁴ To this end, Jesus proclaims in Luke 9:22, "*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers*

²⁴ Efird, James. E. *New Testament Lectures*, 2002.

of the law, and He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. ”

Jesus made His purpose known that He had come to “proclaim or preach” that the kingdom of God is now available to all that will believe that He is the Son of God who bears the sins of the world through His great suffering and death. Jesus, in Luke Chapter 4 beginning at verse 16, reads from the Holy Writ in the synagogue in Nazareth saying,

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.²⁵

Upon reading from Isaiah, Jesus says in the midst of the congregation, “*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*²⁶

THE DISCIPLE’S CALL TO BE WITNESSES

Jesus not only makes His purpose known throughout the New Testament, but He also announces His expectations of His would-be followers. For instance, In Matthew 16:24-27, Jesus instructs His disciples that they must submit to His will and His way and reject

²⁵ Isaiah Chapter 61 verse 1-2.

²⁶ Luke Chapter 4 verse 21.

what is contrary to His commandments. More specifically Jesus tells His disciples,

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.²⁷

Christ, having shown his disciples that he must suffer, tells them that they must suffer too.²⁸ The disciple of Christ must suffer to undergo the work that God has willed, and a way of life that the believers of Jesus Christ are called to live. The disciple of Christ must strive to walk the same way that Jesus walked, and seek to follow His will and His way.

The work that the disciple of Christ must submit to is not only an internal work, but also an external work. The internal work deals with the personal relationship one has with Jesus Christ and allowing His Word to abide and grow in that person's heart, mind, and soul.²⁹ The external work deals with sharing the treasure of Jesus Christ so the world can experience God in Christ Jesus who is ever present

²⁷ Matthew 16:24-27.

²⁸ Matthew Henry Commentary, 87.

²⁹ See Matthew 12:29-30, John 15:4.

and at work in the believer.³⁰ The external work involves being a witness of God's saving grace.

To this end, in reference to the disciples being "called" by God to serve as witnesses, Jesus announces to His disciples after he was resurrected from the dead and before He ascended into the heavens in Acts Chapter 1 verses 8, "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"³¹ Here, while the disciples continue to ask questions regarding the restoration of the earthly "kingdom of Israel," Jesus directs His disciples to their primary concern, which is to be witnesses; that is, to be those who report accurately what they have seen concerning Jesus with an emphasis on His resurrection. "Through the Holy Spirit the disciples will receive power to communicate. This power will make the witnesses clear and convincing and the listeners open and receptive, thus producing converts and genuine disciples."³²

³⁰ See Matthew 5:14-16, 2 Corinthians 4:7.

³¹ See also Luke 24:45. "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures, He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are my witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

³² *Baker Commentary On the Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989) 886.

2 KEY FACTORS IN REFERENCE TO WITNESSING

1. THE TIME IS AT HAND: NOW IS THE APPOINTED TIME TO WITNESS.

The Kingdom of God has arrived in the person and ministry of Jesus.³³ Now is the time for the followers of Christ to engage in sharing the ultimate work of Jesus Christ, which is salvation.

Followers of Jesus Christ must serve as witnesses and pass on to others what they have received from the Lord and what has been revealed by the Lord.

God has ordained that every born-again Christian should, in some way, work for the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20, which is commonly known as “The Great Commission,” is among one of the most compelling verses of Scripture in reference to the command of Jesus to His followers to serve as His witnesses to the world. Jesus declares to His disciples,

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

³³ Luke 17:21.

Undoubtedly, serving as a witness of Jesus Christ is indeed a means by which “Truth” is manifested in our lives. And it is crucial that one recognizes that “now” is the appointed time to serve as witnesses because such time will permanently come to an end. Jesus states in John 9:4, “As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”

2. THE WITNESS OF JESUS CHRIST MUST ENDURE TO THE END.

Certainly the transformation process of passing through the shadow of death to the light of life in Christ Jesus and serving as a light to those who are lost in sin is not easy, but it is necessary that one endures various trials for the sake of gaining eternal life. To this end, the Apostle Paul declares in 2 Corinthians Chapter 4 verses 7-17:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. It is written: "I believe; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the One who raised the LORD JESUS from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence. All this is

for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.³⁴

Thus, Paul stresses that while the believers are frail on many levels; including having the pressures and perplexity of daily life, the power that transforms belongs to God. Thus, though their existence may be very difficult to endure at times, the believer must endure knowing that the Spirit of God is at work in them. The Spirit is transforming them from death to eternal life. Moreover, while the believers are being transformed through God's mercy, they also have been given the ministry of bearing the message that transforms its recipients.³⁵ Thus, the believer must endure the transforming work of the Spirit for the sake of serving as a witness to those who are lost in sin.

While the follower of Christ may experience external difficulties and struggles as a result of striving to be a faithful witness for the glory of God, Jesus declares that one should not be troubled because God is not only in control, but He is faithful.

³⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:7-17.

³⁵ Baker Commentary On The Bible, 988.

Almighty God is indeed a “*rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*”³⁶ In fact, He is a “good” rewarder, for as it is written, “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.*”³⁷ With this, the disciples of Christ can certainly find comfort in the midst of uncertainties. Jesus declares in John 14 “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*”

The believer must hold fast to the Word of God, which includes being a witness of Jesus, even unto death. The Book of Revelation Chapter 2 verse 10 says, “*Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*”

The testimony of the believer bears overwhelming significance, for Revelation Chapter 12 verse 11 states that the world’s victory over Satan lays in the death and resurrection of Christ and in the believers’ faithful witness. More specifically, Revelation Chapter 12 verse 11 declares, “*They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony;*

³⁶ Hebrews 11:6.

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:9.

they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”

Moreover, in Revelation Chapter 20 verse 4, John saw the souls of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God. Here John writes, *“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the Word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands.”*

The believer’s reason for living is to serve and please Jesus. As it is written in the First Commandment, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*³⁸ Believers must strive therefore to make themselves available to serve as a witness for Jesus Christ despite earthly cares and distractions. In this regard Jesus says in Matthew 10 verses 37-39 says, *“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

³⁸ Matthew 22:37.

In the Gospel of John Chapter 21 beginning at verse 15 after Peter's series of denials of Jesus the Christ, and after Jesus appears to the disciples after being raised from the dead, Jesus asks Peter three times in verses 15, 16, and 17 "*Do you love me?*" In verse 15 Jesus specifically asked Peter "*do you truly love me more than these,*" perhaps referring to his love for fishing or even the other disciples. Upon Peter's responses of "*Yes, Lord, you know that I love you,*" Jesus then responds by saying, "*Feed my lambs*" in verse 15, "*Take care of my sheep*" in verse 16, and "*Feed my sheep*" in verse 17. Thus, Jesus indeed calls His disciples to forsake a variety of things; which may include family and friends, careers, pride, etc., and commit themselves to Him and the work of the kingdom.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT WITNESSES

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

-1 Peter 3:15

A great cloud of witnesses is recorded in the Word of God who bears witness to God the Father, God the Son, and God the

Holy Spirit. Their testimonies speak of their experiences with the God of yesterday, today, and forevermore. By God's grace and divine power their testimonies guide their hearers out of "darkness into the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ."³⁹ Each testimonial is a glimpse of the very face of God. Each testimony is also in fulfillment of God's will that His elect will serve as His witnesses in the world.

OLD TESTAMENT WITNESSES

Example One:

After the Lord divinely delivered the Children of Israel from the clutches of the Egyptians through the crossing of the Red Sea, Moses, Miriam, and the Israelites in the Book of Exodus 15:1-20 give their testimonies of praise to God for granting them victory. Moses and Miriam give their account of the course of events that transpired and how God moved on their behalf. Moses even recounts in some detail the boastful and threatening words and actions of his enemy. Exodus Chapter 15 verses 1-20 reads:

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: 'I will sing to the Lord for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my

³⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:6.

strength and my song; He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.' But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you – majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them. In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed. In your strength You will them to Your holy dwelling. The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall upon them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone – until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people you bought pass by. You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance – the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O LORD, your hands established, The LORD will reign for ever and ever. When Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.' Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Exodus 15:1-20.

While the testimony of Moses and Miriam as recorded in Exodus 15 probably was not heard outside of the Israelite camp when it was initially given, the essential elements of the events were somehow broadcast and had a great influence on the nations. Rahab says in Joshua Chapter 2 verses 10-11, *“We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”*

Example Two:

Hannah provides another example of a personal testimony.⁴¹ Hannah was the wife of Elkanah and mother of Samuel. Prior to having Samuel, Hannah was barren for many years and ridiculed by Elkanah’s other wife Penninah. Hannah who was deeply sorrowful because of her barrenness prayed to the Lord that if He would bless her with a son she would dedicate the child to serve in the house of the Lord.

⁴¹1 Samuel 1:1-10.

The Lord indeed granted Hannah's request. The Book of Samuel says that when Hannah presented young Samuel to the house of the Lord at Shiloh, she publicly prayed a prayer in which she essentially gave her testimony of how she prayed that the Lord would allow her to have a child and He had mercy on her and granted her request. Hannah's prayer is indeed her testimony of her personal encounter with Almighty God. Through the words of her testimony, Hannah allows the listener to truly "taste and see that the LORD is good."⁴² Hannah declares in her testimonial prayer that,

My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides You; there is no Rock like our God. Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by Him deeds are weighed. The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's upon them He has set the world. HE will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the

⁴² Psalm 34:8

*ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of his anointed.*⁴³

Example Three:

King David was a warrior for the Lord. Although David was a “man of God” he did not live a life that was without sin. David found favor in the Lord perhaps because God looked past the external and saw David’s heart. David’s life is a verbal, as well as non-verbal, testimony of praise to the Lord. While a reader glimpses who God is through the events of David life, David brings glory to the name of God through his words of prayer and song. In 2 Samuel Chapter 22 verses 1-51, David sings to the Lord a song of praise as a testimony of how the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. Here, David declares:

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge, and my savior – from violent men you save me. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies. The waves of death swirled about me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called to the LORD; I called out to my God. From His temple He heard my voice; my cry came to His ears. The earth trembled and quaked, the foundations of the heavens shook; they trembled because He was angry. Smoke rose from His

⁴³ 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his canopy around him – the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence blots of lightning blazed forth. The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. He shot arrows and scattered the enemies, bolts of lightning and routed them. The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of breath from his nostrils. He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; He rescued me because He delighted in me. The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanliness of my hand He has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God. All His laws are before me; I have not turned away from His decrees. I have been blameless before Him and have kept myself from sin. The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanliness in His sight. To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd. You save the humble, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them low. You are my lamp, O LORD; the Lord turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him. For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; He enables me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You give me your shield of victory; you stoop down to make me great. You broaden the path beneath me, so that my ankles do not turn. I pursued my enemies and crushed them; I did not turn back till they were destroyed. I crushed them completely, and they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet. You armed me with strength for battle; you

made my adversaries bow at my feet. You made my enemies turn their backs in my flight, and I destroyed my foes. They cried for help, but there was no one to save them – to the LORD, but He did not answer. I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth; I pounded and trampled them like mud in the streets. You have delivered me from the attacks of my people; you have preserved me as the head of nations. People I did not know are subject to me, and foreigners come cringing to me; as soon as they hear me, they obey me. They all lose heart; they come trembling from their strongholds. The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God, the Rock, my Savior! He is the God who avenges me, who puts the nations under me, who sets me free from my enemies. You exalted me about my foes; from violent men you rescued me. Therefore I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations; I will sing praises to your name. HE gives his king great victories; HE shows unfailing kindness to HIS anointed, to David and his descendants forever.⁴⁴

In these verses David's praise is directed towards God. The word *halal* means to celebrate, glory, sing (praise), boast.⁴⁵ Surely God is to be praised because He is worthy of praise. Scripture reveals that God is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, The King of kings and Lord of lords. He is Creator, Provider, Healer, Redeemer, Judge, Defender and much more. Thus, David's testimony of praise to God allows all to get a glimpse of the Eternal God.

⁴⁴ 2 Samuel 22:1-51.

⁴⁵ *Vine's Concise Dictionary of the Bible*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1999) 283.

NEW TESTAMENT WITNESSES

John the Baptist, the Samaritan woman at the well, the blind man, Simon Peter, and the Apostle Paul, are among New Testament individuals who offer testimonies to what they have experienced in reference to the Almighty Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The testimonies of these individuals bear witness to the “Good News of Jesus Christ.” In giving his and her testimony, each witness, whether consciously or unconsciously, is “doing the work of an evangelist.”⁴⁶

Example One:

John The Baptist

John the Baptist was a prophet from a priestly family. His role was to prepare the Lord’s people for the Messiah’s coming and by preaching repentance and baptism.

The reason John was baptizing was so that it could be revealed to Israel who the foretold Messiah was going to be. After John baptized his cousin Jesus, the Spirit revealed to him that Jesus was the Messiah. Following this revelation, John the Baptist bore witness that Jesus is the promised Messiah who Israel awaited. To this regard, John gave his testimony in John Chapter 1 verses 32-34 saying, “*I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and*

⁴⁶ 2 Timothy 4:5.

remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God”

Example Two:

The Samaritan Woman At The Well

The Samaritan woman from whom Jesus requested a drink in John Chapter 4 engages in a conversation concerning the difference between well water and the spring of living water that Jesus provides. She also asked about the nature of true worship. Jesus stresses that true worship is not focused in Jerusalem, as the Jews believe, nor on Mount Gerizim, as her people the Samaritans believe, but on the Father, who must be worshipped in spirit and truth. The Samaritan woman receives Jesus' words, asks him to give her the living water of which He speaks, and expresses her anticipation that the Messiah is coming, who “*will explain everything to us.*” In response, Jesus informs her, “*I am He, the One who is speaking to you.*”

After the disciples return, the woman leaves her water jar, and returns to the city and gives her testimony “*Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?*” The

people respond to her testimony and “made their way toward him.”

Finally in verse 42, the people conclude, “*This [Jesus] is truly the Savior of the world.*”

Example Three:

The Man Born Blind

In John Chapter 9 Jesus healed a man born blind. After Jesus sees the blind man and his disciples questioning whether the man was blind because of his own sins or the sins of his parents, Jesus responds by saying, “*Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*” Having said this, the Gospel According to John declares that Jesus then “*spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes.*” Jesus then told the man to “*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.*” After doing this the man received his sight.

When the man went home being able to see his neighbors, those who had previously seen him begging questioned how he was able to see. This man that Jesus healed gave his testimony and said, “*The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I*

could see.” They then asked the man, “*Where is this man?*” In response he said, “*I don’t know.*”

The man who had been blind was then taken to the Pharisees. They investigated the healing that was done on the Sabbath and they used this to discredit Jesus. The man gave his testimony for the glory of God saying, “*He put mud on my eyes and I washed and now I see.*” Also when asked, “*What do you say about him [Jesus],*” the man replied, “*He is a prophet.*”

The Pharisees did not believe the man was blind from birth so they called on his parents and they confirmed that he had been blind from birth. Because they were afraid of the Jews, they told them to direct their questions to their son “because he is of age”. The man then said, “*Whether he [Jesus] is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!*” The man endured the insults and the badgering from the Pharisees. In his final response to the Pharisees question, “*What did he [Jesus] do to you? How did he open your eyes?*” The man replied, “*I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples, too?*” The Pharisees then insult the man for his claim of being a disciple of Jesus Christ and put him out of the synagogue, but his testimony was given for the glory of God that Jesus, the Son of God had healed him.

Example Four:

Simon Peter

Peter, the disciple of Jesus Christ, gives his testimony, as it is ordained by God, of what he received from the Lord in a vision.⁴⁷ The Lord confronts Peter in a vision and teaches Peter “his first major lesson in the new covenant.”⁴⁸ The Lord teaches Peter that God is not a respecter of person and that salvation is not only extended to the Jews, but salvation is extended to any nation that believes on Christ Jesus.

While Peter was praying at about noontime, he wanted something to eat. He fell into a trance and He saw the heavens open and something like a large sheet was lowered and inside were various four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds. Then a voice told Peter to “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” Peter’s Jewish conscience would never allow him to eat what Levitical law prohibited, so Peter answered, “Surely not, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean!” The voice from heaven spoke to Peter a second time saying, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

The Lord was preparing Peter for a meeting with a Gentile leader named Cornelius, who was devout and God-fearing. At this

⁴⁷ Acts Chapter 10:9-33.

⁴⁸ *King James Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999) 1352.

meeting, Peter had a captive audience of both Jews and Gentiles who “had no ordinary social intercourse between each other.”⁴⁹ At this meeting Peter opened his mouth for the glory of God and gave his testimony of the great lesson that he learned from the Lord. To this end, the Book of Acts Chapter 10 verses 34-48 records,

Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fears Him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him. We are witnesses of everything HE did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed Him by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him from the dead on the third day and caused Him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen – by us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the One whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.’ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. The Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.’ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ King James Bible Commentary, 1353.

⁵⁰ Acts 10:38-48.

Example Five:

The Apostle Paul

Another prominent witness in the New Testament is the Apostle Paul. Paul, who was on his way to Damascus to persecute believers, had an encounter with the resurrected and glorified Christ. Christ appeared to him with blinding radiance. When Paul stood before King Agrippa, he spoke clearly and simply in regard to his conversion experience. Paul gives his testimony of how he had come to know Jesus and how Jesus radically changed his life. To this end, Paul recounts:

On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' So then king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I

stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen – that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to His own people and to the Gentiles.⁵¹

The Apostle Paul used his personal testimony of how Jesus changed his life on numerous occasions. Perhaps Paul understood how powerful his testimony was in building a bridge for someone who does not have a relationship with Jesus Christ. One commentator states, “You would think that this man of brilliant intellect, trained in the great knowledge of his day and possessing a tremendous grasp and understanding of Scripture, would lean upon his extensive knowledge and oratorical skills when telling others of the Gospel. Yet more often than not, when standing before Roman governors and leaders, Paul would begin by telling his personal story of how he came to know Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord.”⁵²

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF BIBLICAL WITNESSES

Scripture certainly provides examples of people who have given their account of their experiences with God. More specifically, the New Testament provides many examples of

⁵¹ Acts 26:12-18.

⁵² Laurie, Greg. *How To Share Your Faith.* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999) 40.

encounters between Jesus and everyday people. Many of these people became disciples of Jesus such as the Apostle Paul and the other witnesses that are illustrated in this section. While each of these witnesses come from very diverse backgrounds, the one thing they all have in common is a testimony of how Jesus changed their lives.

Again, Scripture supports that these faith stories should be shared with others. Another striking circumstance that illustrates this fact is the encounter between Jesus and the man from Gerasa who was possessed with demons.⁵³ After Jesus healed this demon-possessed man who for many years had exhibited extremely destructive behaviors, this man wanted to go away with Jesus and His traveling group of disciples. Instead Jesus told him to “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” This man obeyed and became a powerful witness for Jesus all over the town. He told his story to many of what Jesus had done for him.

⁵³ Luke 8:26-39.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this literature review is to identify books that directly relate to this project in terms of content and methodology. I will summarize and analyze the relevant aspects of these books that can prove helpful, especially as one approaches the teaching aspect this thesis project.

In the literature search there were only two instances in which the term “preaching and testimony” was found. There is however a large body of literature that independently deals with preaching, and then again, witnessing. A review of such material will be helpful in guiding the preacher in incorporating testimony in preaching.

This literature review is divided into three sections. These three sections address the core essentials that make up this project. The first section is made up of preaching resources, the second section deals with resources for biblical exegesis, and the third section suggests strategies for giving personal testimonies.

PREACHING RESOURCES

Sermon preparation and delivery are critical to this thesis.

The following books can assist in the process of sermon preparation and sermon delivery. While this thesis project deals with incorporating faith stories in sermons, communicating the biblical truths that are drawn from the biblical text is the first goal. The personal testimony is secondary. Thus, the following books focus on various aspects of sermon preparation and delivery, which begins the process that leads up to incorporating faith stories in sermons.

Chapell, Bryan. Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1994.

Preaching the Gospel is a central theme in this project. This text is a valuable guide for preachers to follow as they strive to preach sermons that are faithful to Scripture and effective in reaching listeners. The first nine chapters of this book are dedicated to expounding on principles for expository preaching and its preparation.

This author gives further emphasis to preaching Christ-centered sermons, which also coincide with this study. In reference

to preparing Christ-centered sermons; which is a redemptive approach to preaching, the author states,

When my listeners walk out the doors of this sanctuary to perform God's will, with whom do they walk? If they march to battle the world, the flesh, and the devil with only me, myself, and I, then each parades in despair. However, if the sermon has lead all persons within sight of the Savior and they now walk into their world with his aid firmly in their grasp, then hope and victory brighten the horizon.⁵⁴

Preaching Christ-centered sermons is vital and chapters ten and eleven of this book should be carefully reviewed as the author states, "Whether people depart alone or in the Savior's hand will make the difference between futility and faith, legalism and true obedience, do-goodism and real godliness."⁵⁵

In the appendices, the author addresses issues of delivery. The author also gives a list of study resources, a sample sermon evaluation form, and a select preaching bibliography, which are all very informative. This text is a very thorough work and is central to the preaching aspect of this project because it offers sound theological methods when approaching the task of preaching.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 285.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 286.

**Forbes, James. The Holy Spirit and Preaching. Nashville:
Abingdon Press, 1989.**

Preachers must depend upon the Holy Spirit to lead them according to the will of God. In this book, James Forbes pinpoints the vital connection between the Holy Spirit and preaching. Forbes supports his position by discussing the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry. He states that,

To preach today in Jesus name, and to do so with power, still requires the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit. I do not know a conscientious preacher anywhere who would claim to preach without at least some acknowledgement of the aid of the Spirit, even if the minister did not tend to speak of it in that way. There are many who are waiting for and depending on the power from beyond themselves-and there are many who are aware that if that power is not present, the preaching will not be effective.⁵⁶

In the beginning chapters Forbes gives excellent Old Testament and New Testament illustrations to support his position that there is a need for God's anointing. In Chapter Four, which is entitled "Sermon Preparation and Preaching," Forbes links scriptural references to how the Holy Spirit is at work with the preacher during sermon preparation.

This book is an excellent resource as the author addresses the Holy Spirit as he relates to preaching. The author gives a sound

⁵⁶ Ibid., 21.

theological argument to support his position; as he states, “I am convinced that vast improvements in preaching can be expected if, in addition to traditional sermon preparation for preaching ministry, more attention is given to the process by which preachers are endowed with the Holy Spirit for the work they are called to do.”⁵⁷

Ford, Leighton. The Christian Persuader: The Urgency of Evangelism in Today’s World. Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1988.

In this book the author talks about the urgency to effectively present the Gospel to the world in personal conversation and mass communication. I have included this book in the literature review because of its discussion on the question of urgency in evangelism. It is important that the preacher explores this discussion in sermon preparation to ignite a passion for souls. The author states,

We do not automatically have a concern for evangelism. We do not drift into it, for it is costly business. It cost God his Son. It cost Jesus gaping wounds, bloody sweat, and mocking laughter. When the four men took their paralyzed friend to Jesus, they had to tear up the roof to get him to the Savior. As a friend of mine colorfully comments, “Someone had to pay for that roof.” No one ever comes to Jesus unless someone pays for the roof. Perhaps that is why we are so easily cooled off by the many influences which are deadening our urgency today.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 18.

In Chapters One and Two, the author offers insight on the question of urgency in sharing Christ. The author approaches this issue from a theological perspective that he links with personal observations and experiences. The result is sure to allow the preacher to be rededicated to “the high calling” of spreading the Gospel.

Larue, Cleophus J. The Heart of Black Preaching. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

The Heart of Black Preaching, by Cleophus J. Larue addresses an essential ingredient to this thesis-project. This book talks about aspects of African American preaching that are consistent with its rich heritage. Larue makes the argument that “there is in powerful black preaching a distinctive, biblical hermeneutic that when identified and understood can provide a meaningful insight into the preaching that commonly occurs in the traditional black religious experience.”⁵⁹

The thrust of Larue’s argument is that Black preaching is powerful because God matters. According to Larue, powerful black preaching has at its center a “biblical hermeneutic that views God as

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1.

a powerful sovereign acting mightily on behalf of dispossessed and marginalized people.”⁶⁰ Larue further states that in addition to possessing a strong faith in God, black preaching in this context also consists of an understanding of the “socioculture context of the black experience” and “the creation of a sermon that speaks in a relevant practical manner to the common domains of experience in black life.”⁶¹

Thus, Larue’s theory is that “the distinctive power of black preaching is tied directly to what black people believe about God’s proactive intervention and involvement in their experiences.”⁶²

After Larue explores the historical circumstances under which African Americans embraced Christianity, in chapters two and three of the book he provides the basis for his theory by analyzing sermons written by eleven nineteenth and twentieth century African American preachers.

This book is relevant to this study as it serves a reminder to the preacher of certain elements that are present in black preaching that have become a part of its rich legacy. This book has great potential to influence the preacher to focus on God-centered sermons. In addition this book sets a theory in motion that allows

⁶⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁶¹ Ibid., 6.

⁶² Ibid., 2.

preachers to connect with their audience as they engage in the sermon preparation process that will result in the integration of personal testimony.

Litfin, Duane. Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981.

This book is an extremely helpful for the speaker that wants to be a more effective communicator. The author tackles important issues such as adapting to your audience, developing a central idea, developing style and content, and effective delivery skills.

While this text is not necessarily written for preachers but for a broader array of Christian public speakers, the last chapter of the book is dedicated to preparing a biblical message, which is essential to this study. Also in the last chapter of this book is a section on personal testimony, which is beneficial to this particular study. The author offers good insights in reference to preparing a Christ-centered personal testimony. In reference to personal testimony, Liftin states,

Every Christian has a personal testimony, including you. It is the account of what God has done in your life. Such stories are not only interesting; they are also worthwhile. They focus the audience's attention on the activity of God as seen in the life of one individual. As we have already observed, people are interested in other people; and when a personal testimony

of even a very ordinary individual is done well, the result is a fascinating and profitable speech.⁶³

Robinson, Haddon W. Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.

This book by renowned preacher and professor of homiletics, Haddon W. Robinson, is a valuable resource as it offers a sermon preparation technique that will enable the preacher to be faithful to the biblical text. The author gives insights on how to preach sermons that develop a central idea drawn from the biblical text. The author further includes insight on effective sermon delivery skills, which is also a vital aspect of this study.

Interpreting the biblical text correctly should be the primary goal in testimonial preaching. This book provides a very thorough road map for preachers to follow while engaging in the process of sermon preparation and delivery.

⁶³ Ibid., 336.

Robinson, Haddon W. Biblical Sermons. Grand Rapids,

Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989.

This book is a collection of sermons from former students of Haddon W. Robinson. According to the author, this book was written “to demonstrate how the approach to homiletics in Biblical Preaching is worked out in sermons of several experienced communicators.”⁶⁴ In addition to the sermons, the author gives an evaluation of each sermon, and includes his interviews with the preachers “to probe what ministers do and how they prepare.”⁶⁵

The development of biblical sermons is key to this thesis project. This book of sermons is a valuable resource to participants of this thesis project because it allows them to move from theory, to an illustrated practice of the development of expository sermons.

RESOURCES FOR BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

Exegesis is the process by which one comes to understand the text. As previously stated, while this thesis project deals with incorporating faith stories in sermons, communicating the biblical truths that are drawn from the text is foremost. The following books

⁶⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 12.

can prove helpful as one engages in the process of exegesis in this thesis-project.

Fee, Gordon D. and Stuart, Douglas. How To Read The Bible

For All It's Worth: A Guide To Understanding The Bible.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993.

This book is an excellent resource as it focuses on providing keys to understanding the various types of genre in Scripture. This book should be referred to quite often as the authors give much attention to the uniqueness of each Bible genre. The authors also offer an approach for raising hermeneutical questions drawn from the given genre. The authors are further concerned with how the reader is to interpret the text to its modern audience. Thus, this book is a treasure for the preacher who wishes to maximize their understanding of the Bible.

Gorman, Michael J. Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic

Guide for Students and Ministers. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.

Primarily written for students and ministers, this book offers a helpful approach to exegesis. The book presents seven elements that

the author contends are “necessary elements of a careful reading, or exegesis.”⁶⁶ These elements are survey; contextual analysis; formal analysis; detailed analysis of the text; synthesis; reflection; and expansion and refinement of the exegesis.

The author covers each element in separate chapters. In each chapter the author gives a review, practical hints, and exercises to assist the reader in grasping each step. The author also gives a bibliography at the end of each chapter and in the appendices he provides two sample exegesis papers.

While the book is a good resource, I found that the author spent too much time introducing the task of exegesis in Chapter One, and explaining how to select the text in Chapter two. Furthermore, the chapters are not well organized. While the information is very useful, the presentation of the material is very busy.

Hayes, John H. Holladay. and Carl R. Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook. John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1987.

The goal of biblical exegesis is “to reach an informed understanding of the text.”⁶⁷ This book is an extremely helpful resource as it lays a good foundation for Old and New Testament

⁶⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 23.

Exegesis. The book is very easy to read and is organized very well. Each chapter separately addresses the various techniques of biblical criticism. The “criticisms” that are discussed are textual criticism; historical criticism; grammatical criticism; literary criticism; form criticism; tradition criticism; redaction criticism; structuralist criticism; and canonical criticism.

The authors do an excellent of explaining the criticisms in terms of theory and practice. Furthermore, the end of each section contains an extensive bibliography. The book also offers helpful illustrations that assist the reader with applying the various principles.

STRATEGIES FOR GIVING PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

The following books are important to this study. Each of these books provides information that will assist in formulating methods for sharing personal testimonies in Chapter Four of this thesis project. These books also assist in providing theological arguments in favor of sharing Christian testimonies.

Christian authors having a high regard for the need of evangelism in our present times wrote the books that are included in this section. The information that is drawn from these books can prove helpful in allowing one to communicate faith stories in sermons that are life-changing.

Bass, Dorothy C. Practicing Our Faith: A Guide for Conversation, Learning, and Growth. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

This book is written for a wide range of people who are seeking to practice their faith more fully in the current culture. Chapter Seven is the most relevant chapter for the purposes of this thesis project.

This Chapter entitled “Testimony” written by Thomas Hoyt Jr., a New Testament scholar captures the essence of what influenced this thesis project, which is the practice of testimony in the African American Church. For someone who is not familiar with the practice of testimony in this context, Chapter Seven gives great insight about how “its power can be reclaimed for the good of all people.”⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Ibid., 93.

Furthermore, “Testimony and the Bible,” and “Preaching as Testimony” are also relevant sections that are key to this thesis-project. The section “Testimony and the Bible” offers a theological basis for testimony based on Scripture. Also, the section “Preaching and Testimony” acknowledges that preaching is a form of prophetic testimony “that makes compelling claims on both preacher and hearers.”⁶⁹

While only a small portion of this book addresses testimonial preaching, the insights that are offered can be useful in this project.

Daniel, Lillian. Tell it Like it is: Reclaiming The Practice Of Testimony. Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2006.

This book takes its readers on a journey of a Protestant congregation named Church of Redeemer that intentionally incorporates giving personal testimonies during worship service. The author, Lillian Daniel, formally served as senior pastor to this congregation located in New England.

Daniel tells how sharing faith stories transformed her congregation. She states, “By intentionally embarking on this risk-filled pilgrimage of testimony, the people of Redeemer unintentionally revitalized their congregation. Once on the verge of

⁶⁹ Ibid., 98.

closing, Redeemer is again a lively church. Engaging the practice of testimony transformed the people, a minister, ministry, and the future of their congregation.”⁷⁰

The author defines testimony “as a spoken word in the context of worship, and it could not omit God.”⁷¹ Throughout the book the author gives examples of testimonies that were shared by her congregation. The author shares many aspects of their journey to “learn to give one another’s faith stories a hearing.”⁷²

The most relevant section of this book for the purposes of this study is a section in the preface entitled “Rediscovering Testimony in Scripture,” and in chapter seven, “Preaching and Testimony.” In the section “Rediscovering Testimony in Scripture” the author gives an overview of testimony in the Scripture. Such insight allows the reader to build a theological basis for personal testimonies.

In chapter seven, entitled “Preaching and Testimony” the author reflects on the first time she incorporated her testimony in preaching; which is the main thrust of this thesis-project. The author not only includes the sermon, but she also discusses various struggles she encountered during the sermonic process. The author also discusses various responses of her sermon by the congregation.

⁷⁰ Ibid., xi.

⁷¹ Ibid., xiv.

⁷² Ibid., xiv.

In light of this thesis project, there is much to be gained from this particular chapter of the book as it directly addresses incorporating personal testimony when proclaiming the Gospel.

I found the author to be theologically liberal in her thinking. I questioned author's theology in certain sections of book when she reflected on various testimonies that were given by herself and members of her congregation. While the author and I hold different theological viewpoints, we do agree with the basic premise that there is a sound theological basis for testifying, and there is a place for incorporating personal testimony when preaching the Gospel.

Ford, Leighton. The Power of Story: Rediscovering the Oldest Most Natural Way to Reach People for Christ. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994.

The author this book, Leighton Ford, makes a case for sharing the Gospel by telling your story of how God has transformed your life. The author refers to this method as "narrative evangelism." The author states,

Each of us has a story – what I call “a story with a small s,” the story of our own lives. At some point in our journey through life, our story collides with the Story of God – “the Story with a large S.” God’s Story calls our story into

question. We must make a choice: either to reject the story of God or to merge our story with His story.⁷³

The author further contends that, “The Story produces a Vision,

which then transforms Character, resulting in evangelism.”

According to the author, This process of - Story, Vision, Character,

Evangelism – “provides us with a clear, workable, biblical pattern

for effective, natural witnessing.”⁷⁴

In the book, the author develops his concept of narrative evangelism through a fictional story about three people of our times.

The author uses this fictional story to assist the reader in discovering

his or her story, and in the process, to help spread the “Story of

God.” The author addresses “The Story of God” in three distinct

dimensions. They are (1) The love of the Father, (2) The grace of

the Son, and (3) The fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

While I find that the author clearly illustrates the impact that sharing your personal story of God can have on others, the author

could have better arranged the methods for developing faith stories.

I found that the chapters were broad. It was difficult to quickly tie

his concepts for telling faith stories together.

⁷³ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 11.

Laurie, Greg. How To Share Your Faith. Wheaton, Illinois:

Tyndale House Publishers, 1999.

This very practical book offers essential building blocks that lead up to sharing a personal testimony. The author discusses various key issues in reference to sharing your faith such as being sensitive to the timing and leading of the Holy Spirit and being a compassionate communicator. In Chapter Nine the author gives insight on giving your personal testimony in a manner that “makes a beeline to the cross.”

The author also gives very colorful illustrations throughout the book that are thought- provoking and inspiring for sharing the Gospel. The author uses real-life illustrations as well as Scripture references to guide readers on their journey to sharing their faith.

Neville, Joyce. How to Share Your Faith Without Being

Offensive. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.

The author takes a clear and practical approach to sharing your faith that makes this book an excellent resource. While this book’s primary focus is “Witnessing and the Development of Small Groups,” this helps the reader to gain an understanding of various

aspects of verbally sharing your faith, which is a major component of this thesis-project.

Part one of the book, which is divided into eleven chapters, is the most helpful aspect of the book in providing good information for the purpose of this study. In this particular section, the author dissects the notion of verbally sharing your faith. The author defines what a witness is and isn't, offers the purpose of verbal witnesses, and what qualifies one to be a witness. While these sections to aided the reader in discovering a foundation for sharing your verbal witness, I found that the author's most useful material for this study is found in Chapter Four entitled "What to Witness About- 39 Subjects," and Chapter Five, "How to Witness- 21 Guidelines."

In Chapter Four the author offers various subjects for witness for one to use as a guide to "catalyze your awareness of the many-faceted ways our Lord is active in your life."⁷⁵ The suggested topic will certainly allow preachers to begin to think about various instances in which God acts in their lives which they can later incorporate in their sermon. Furthermore, the author explains in Chapter Five, which is entitled "How to Witness," that "although any Christian can witness without training since he is relating personal experience, effective verbal witnessing is a skill to be

⁷⁵ Ibid., 12.

cultivated by most us.”⁷⁶ The author therefore offers extremely helpful guidelines to improve one’s effectiveness when sharing his or her testimony.

Peel, William C. and Lattimore Walt. Going Public with Your Faith. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

The book Going Public with Your Faith gives a model for becoming a spiritual influence at work. In Chapter Six the authors include guidelines for developing faith stories and examples of faith stories. Although the authors give a model that coincides with Joyce Neville and Rosiland Rinker, they add greater insight about giving personal testimonies.

Although the authors write this book in an attempt to foster evangelistic strategies in the workplace rather than church settings, they hold that faith stories have a meaningful place in spreading the Gospel. They state,

A faith story portrays in narrative form how God or a biblical principle became real to you. It is a testimony about a specific time when something spiritual happened to you. It doesn’t tell someone how to know God, but it communicates that he is at work and making a meaningful difference in your life. God often uses these faith stories to intensify a hunger for him. It is a powerful way to communicate spiritual truth in an inviting form.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 93.

In addition, Chapter Five of this book offers a thought-provoking discussion on being a witness versus witnessing. This discussion allows the preacher to further gain a perspective on his or her calling to be witnesses, which is also an important aspect of this study.

Poe, Harry Lee. Christian Witness In A Postmodern World.

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

The book was written to show how the Gospel speaks to the underlying spiritual questions of the emerging postmodern world. It allows the preacher to seriously reflect on methods of approaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and using their personal faith stories.

In Chapter One and Chapter Seven the author has sections on Christian testimonies. In Chapter One, the author comments on testimonies that are recorded in the New Testament given so that all may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In Chapter Seven, the author states,

The power of testimony lies in the fact it tells a story. When Christians give their testimony, they tell their own story. The testimony has many advantages as a way of communicating the message of the gospel in a way people are willing to hear.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Ibid., 136.

The author further states that testimonies have many advantages because they are unique, identifiable, interesting, relevant, personal, and authoritative.

The author gives insight on the development of testimonies. Four crucial points that usually makes up a good testimony are (1) Introduction, (2) Crisis, (3) Climax, and (4) Resolution.

Pointer, Roy. Tell What God Has Done. New York: American Bible Society, 1983.

This booklet is designed to assist Christians with telling their personal faith stories and sharing their faith. The author recognizes that giving personal testimonies is probably the most difficult task of all of the topics that he addresses. The author gives three basic elements of “before”, “how”, and “since”, that are essential parts of Christian testimonies. The author first gives examples of biblical testimonies, and then helps readers to tell their own story by first reflecting on a series of questions, and then helping the reader apply the three essential elements to faith stories that he has constructed.

Although the book offers some insight to giving personal testimonies, the book is very elementary and lacks depth and creativity.

**Rinker, Rosiland. You Can Witness With Confidence. Grand
Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962.**

The author of this book, Rosiland Rinker, writes this book based on her first experiences attempting to witness and on her years of serving as a missionary in China. The author documents her journey of personal growth as a witness. As the author shares her journey she gives believers straightforward and spiritually sound suggestions in reference to personal witnessing. One can certainly draw valuable nuggets from this book and apply them when considering incorporating their testimony in their sermon. Rinker states,

When we learn the secrets of being a witness to Jesus Christ, we learn the difference between being an objective and subjective witness. Love is the first requisite. Love teaches us (a) when to speak of Christ and who He is, and (b) when to speak of the difference His Presence makes in daily living and relationships.⁷⁹

In Chapter Ten, Rinker includes a discussion on “Giving a Personal Testimony.” In this chapter Rinker classifies a personal testimony as “an important art of witnessing.”⁸⁰ Rinker gives rich insight to when one tells a story of God’s working in their life. She

⁷⁹ Ibid., preface.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 49.

comments on the difference between a mature and immature personal testimony. Rinker states,

An immature witness bubbles out, spills out, runs over, full of generalities, related by a person intoxicated with his own experience. A mature witness will not bore others with generalities, but will be specific and only share what the other person needs. In mature witnessing, concentration is not on what you say, but on getting the other person and the Lord together. You are concerned with where they are and where they ought to be. Just as Jesus was.⁸¹

She gives further insights for giving personal testimony in the form of storytelling. She states,

Tell it in story form, with all the characteristics of drama: contrast, suspense, vividness, punchline and climax. The story carries its own witness and power-there is no need to preach, or to drive it home, or to exhort! It tells what God has done. It gives credit and glory to God. It's personal. It's fresh in time and in spirit. It speaks to the listener's need, not to his sins. It does not destroy faith, it builds faith. It's intelligible and pungent English. It's alive and enthusiastic. It's always in good taste. It's brief. It includes encounter with God and with man.⁸²

One of the author's strengths is her ability to underline the importance of depending on God, as the one who not only guides you in the process, but also does the work. This concept is key and should not be forgotten when sharing personal testimonies.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 50.

Walsh, John. The Art of Telling Story: Easy Steps to Presenting An Unforgettable Story. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003.

This book provides simple steps for telling exceptional stories. While this Christian author writes this book for a wide spectrum of speakers, he holds that storytelling can play a key role in ministry. The author states, “Storytelling is a gift we all have. God has given you this gift, and it is superior to the storytelling ability give to any other earthly creature.”⁸³

One of the goals of this thesis project is to share faith stories that will have a life-changing effect on its listeners. The author states in Chapter One that “Enhancing your storytelling skills will increase your ability to affect people you have not been able to reach before.”⁸⁴ This book is key to this study because a personal testimony can be enhanced when one applies the concepts of storytelling that are given.

This well-organized book includes “14 Steps to Preparing an Unforgettable Story.” The author gives a discussion on the various steps. Following the discussions, the author includes exercises that are designed, as he states, “to offer you shortcuts that would take years to learn on your own.”⁸⁵ I found the steps to be extremely

⁸³ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 12.

helpful in sharpening and intensifying the way faith stories communicated.

Walsh includes “7 tools for Presenting Unforgettable Story.” They are imagination, facial expression, body movements, your voice, the pause, nervousness, and confidence. He gives very helpful insights on each tool and states that these are seven quality tools you will need that will allow you to work less and accomplish more.

The book includes three sections in the appendices that are very helpful in allowing one sharpen their ability to tell faith stories.

In the first section the author has a section on “Adapting an Adult Short Story.” The author states in the beginning of the book,

Children’s books are the best source for small, structured stories. Books written for adults are full of details that entertain the reader but get in the way of a storyteller.⁸⁶

Thus, in this section of the appendices Walsh illustrates how to take an adult story and develop it for telling. In the second section He gives examples of stories that have incorporated the techniques that are discussed in this book. Examples are always helpful in allowing the reader to see how to apply the various concepts that are discussed. The final section of the appendices He gives an excellent

⁸⁶ Ibid., 26.

list of storytelling resources for the reader to refer to when developing their own stories.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

This course, Spreading the Gospel Through Testimonial Preaching, is designed to help preachers present clear biblical sermons in which they share personal faith stories. Bringing together the proclamation of God's Word with a testimony of a personal experience of God allows for a mighty strong witness of the Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This course is designed for five to twelve students who are attending a five-day church conference workshop. While it would well serve divinity students who have taken Old and New Testament Exegesis, and an Introductory Preaching course, preachers who have not had formal seminary training could benefit from these seminars.

This course has five sections. Each section, except for the last two sections, is divided into two sessions that are two hours in length. Each of the last two sections consist of two sessions that are both four hours in length. The entire course time is 28 class hours. The last two sections require more time because the students will

engage in giving individual oral presentations that will be critiqued by the instructor and students.

The first session, “An Urgency to Spread the Gospel,” introduces the course as it discusses the problem and its setting. The second section is “What is the Big Idea?” Using Haddon Robinson’s book, Biblical Preaching, the first session will address the need for a single idea for effective communication. In the second session the students will complete practice exercises to reinforce this concept.

The third session of the course is entitled, “Techniques for Sharing Faith Stories.” These sessions focus on offering various strategies to consider when sharing faith stories. The last two sessions are designed so that student can actually practice the methods that are presented. In the fourth session entitled, “Sharing faith stories,” each student will give a personal testimony in front of the class. In the fifth session, entitled, “Incorporating Faith Stories within Sermons,” each student will preach a 25-minute expository sermon in which they will incorporate a personal testimony.

Another important aspect of this thesis-project is offering and receiving critiques. Critiques assist in evaluating goals and objectives, and they are a means to gain recommendations for future courses. In the last two “practice” sessions the instructor and students will have the opportunity to give oral and written

evaluations of how each student performed. Also, to assist in fulfilling the “outcomes” component of this thesis project, at the end of the course, the students will complete a questionnaire concerning their overall experience. Time will also be allocated for an in class discussion to allow the students to speak openly concerning their experience.

The following is a course syllabus that will be distributed so that the students will know what to expect in each session.

COURSE SYLLABUS

STUDENT HANDOUT # 1

THE FIRST SECTION: “TESTIMONIAL PREACHING: A METHOD TO COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL”

SESSION # 1 – LECTURE

THE PROBLEM: An Urgency to Spread The Gospel.

Two important themes will be raised that are linked to the problem. These themes are (1) Testimonial Preaching is a Method to Communicate the Gospel, and (2) The Power of Personal Faith Stories.

SESSION # 2 - GROUP ACTIVITY

Students will be asked to introduce themselves to the class.

Assignment For Next Time:

Review Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of Robinson, Haddon W. Biblical
Preaching.

THE SECOND SECTION: “WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA?”

SESSION # 3 -LECTURE

The importance of determining the main idea of the text will be communicated. Questions that help determine the “big idea” of the text will be introduced.

SESSION # 4 - GROUP ACTIVITY

Class will work together to complete handout exercises on determining the “big idea” of the biblical text.

Assignment For Next Time:

(1) Select a passage of Scripture that reflects a personal faith story that you have experienced. In the next class, inform the instructor of your selection. You will preach from this text in class at a later date. (2) Re-read Robinson, Haddon W. Biblical Sermons: How Twelve Preachers Apply the Principles of Biblical Preaching.

THE THIRD SECTION: “TECHNIQUES FOR SHARING FAITH STORIES”

SESSION # 5 - LECTURE

Several biblical principles and methods will be given to assist the preachers with communicating their testimonies in their sermon structure.

SESSION # 6 - LECTURE

Instructor will continue giving biblical principles and methods that will assist the preachers with communicating their testimonies in their sermon structure.

Assignment For Next Time:

After reviewing lecture notes from the last two sessions, prepare a 10-minute personal testimony that will be given in front of the class without the use of notes.

THE FOURTH SECTION: “SHARING FAITH STORIES”

SESSION # 7 - TESTIFYING

This entire section (Session # 7 and Session # 8) provides the opportunity to put into practice some of the material that we have learned in this course. Each student will give a 10-minute Christian testimonial. Each student will provide oral and written feedback of testimonies.

SESSION # 8 - TESTIFYING

Class will continue with course plans as indicated in Session # 7.

Assignment For Next Time:

Considering all that you have learned in this class (finding the big idea of text, techniques for sharing faith stories, etc) write a 25-minute sermon in which you have incorporated a personal testimony that is relevant to your message. Tomorrow each student will preach his or her completed sermon in class by use of the full manuscript. The class will provide oral and written sermon evaluations.

THE FIFTH SECTION: “INCORPORATING FAITH STORIES WITHIN SERMONS”

SESSION # 9 - PREACHING

Students will deliver sermons in this section (Session # 9 and Session # 10). The class will give oral and written evaluations of sermons.

SESSION # 10 - PREACHING

Class will continue with course plans as indicated in Session # 9. At the conclusion of course the class will fill out course evaluation forms.

*“SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH TESTIMONIAL
PREACHING”*

SECTION I

**TESTIMONIAL PREACHING: A METHOD TO
COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL**

SESSION ONE & SESSION TWO

The first section, sessions one and session two, serves as an introduction of the entire course and an introduction of the instructor and students. The goal of this section is that the students will be able to identify the major themes that the instructor is addressing and the students will be able to identify how these themes are relevant in the context of ministry. Another goal of this section is the instructor and the students will know each other better in terms of their personal backgrounds, and an environment that is encouraging, trusting, respectful, and enthusiastic would have been established.

The following outline is designed for the instructor to follow in session one and session two.

I. Invocation

A. Songs (Lead by Instructor with participation from the class)

1. I Am Thine, O Lord

2. We're Marching to Zion

3. There is a Name I Love to Hear

B. Prayer of Praise, Thanksgiving and Consecration

II. Welcome (Instructor will conduct the following)

A. General Greeting to Students

B. Formal Introduction of Instructor

III. Introduction of the Course

A. Urgency to Spread the Gospel

B. A Method to Communicate the Gospel

C. Call to Testify

IV. Break

V. Introduction of the Course (Continued)

A. Incorporating Faith Stories Within Sermons

B. The Approach to Accomplishing The Task

C. Course Expectations

Session # 2

I. Student Introductions

II. Break

III. Student Introductions

IV. Questions

V. Review Schedule for Tomorrow's Class.

VI. Volunteer to Close Session Out in Prayer

SESSION ONE

The class will begin with the instructor leading the class in song and prayer. This is done to set the tone in acknowledging the presence of the Holy Spirit and our dependence on Him. Each student will be given a copy of the songs. The songs will be lead by the instructor. Following the singing, the instructor will lead the class in a prayer of praise, thanksgiving, and consecration.

Next, the instructor will give a brief welcome to the students. The students will be given the opportunity to formally introduce themselves in session two. The instructor will then formally introduce herself to the class. The instructor will share information regarding where she lives, family background, education, ministerial background, etc. This will allow the students to have a well-rounded picture of the instructor.

The instructor will now begin to carry out the main objectives of the course.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOAL #1: Students will be able to identify the major themes that the instructor is addressing and be able to identify how these themes are relevant in the context of ministry.

OBJECTIVES:

The instructor will give a lecture that includes the following

1. A discussion of the following themes:

The Urgency to Spread the Gospel

Testimonial Preaching as a Method to Communicate the Gospel

The Power of Personal Faith Stories

2. The argument will be made that incorporating personal faith stories in sermons is a legitimate means for serving as an effective witness of Jesus Christ.
3. The methods that will be taught in this course.

What is the Big Idea?

Techniques for Sharing Faith Stories

Techniques for storytelling

4. The Course Expectations

Each student should have already read the two

required text for this course. (1) Robinson, Haddon

W. Biblical Preaching, and (2) Robinson, Haddon W. Biblical Sermons.

Each student will share a 10-15 minute testimony without notes in which the methods that are discussed are implemented.

Preach a 20-25 minute sermon with notes in which you incorporate a personal testimony that directly relates to some aspect of the sermon idea.

TEACHING STRATEGY: Lecture.

The Following lecture notes have been constructed to help guide the instructor in carrying out the course goals and objectives.

URGENCY TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL

Leighton Ford in his book The Christian Persuader: The Urgency of Evangelism in Today's World, tells a story in which his little girl, Debbie Jean, was lost. She had gone out to play with her four-year-old brother. When he called for her, she did not answer. His four-year-old son told him that she went to the schoolyard. When Leighton got to the school, she was nowhere to be found. He

and his wife began to search the neighborhood. Two of their neighbors said that they saw her walking toward the school. As his wife checked the shopping center, he went back to the school. There still was no sign of her. Fearing the silence, He began to walk up and down the road calling for his little girl. He says that it was difficult for him to push out of his mind stories he had heard of men picking up little girls. A half hour later, Leighton's little girl Debbie Jean came walking around the corner of the school, smiling. She said she had gone to a candy store just beyond the school, and over to a friend's house.

When this emotionally taxing episode was over, Leighton reflected on the incident. He states that nothing else mattered during the almost two hours that Debbie Jean was missing. He had an abundance of work waiting for him in his study but it was of no consequence to him. He could only think about one thing: his girl was lost. He only had one prayer that he prayed over and over again, "O God, help me to find her."

Leighton then asked himself the question, "Had I as a Christian minister felt that same terrible urgency about men who were lost from God?" He wondered if he really believed the words that he once heard preached that stated "If a man has a soul, and he has, and if that soul can be won or lost for eternity, and it can, then

the most important thing in the world is to bring a man to Jesus Christ.”

It is impossible to talk about the task of preaching the Gospel without first considering that evangelism, as Leighton states, “It is a passion – a passion of the heart which issues in saving action.

Evangelism is the passion of Moses who went back to the LORD and said, ‘Oh this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.’ It is the passion of Paul, ‘Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.’ It is the anguished cry of Jesus as He weeps over a doomed city, ‘Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.’⁸⁷

The question of urgency in evangelism must be addressed to help shape the perspective of preachers as they approach their call to service. I wholeheartedly agree with Leighton Ford when he states, “God has not made us responsible for the ultimate triumph of Christ. What he has given us is the task of evangelizing this present generation. And we shall most certainly fail in the task unless the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 17.

church is gripped by far more compelling urgency than we now evidence.”⁸⁸

“Jesus Christ is the urgency of evangelism!”⁸⁹ As 2 Corinthians 5:10, 14 declares, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” but we can also be redeemed by the love of God, which acted in the death of Jesus Christ for our reconciliation. In our pursuit of evangelism, we must keep these two tensions alive, “that the effects of sin on human nature, and especially on the human will must be such that man needs a redeemer; on the other hand, it must only be such that he remains susceptible of redemption.”⁹⁰

We must believe wholeheartedly in the very Gospel that we preach. We must believe that “evangelism is a cross in the heart of God.”⁹¹ Leighton Ford notes in his book that the question was raised by a condemned prisoner of the minister who was trying to bring him to faith in Christ, “Do you really believe what you say, Chaplain? If I believed your Gospel were true, I would crawl across England on broken glass to tell men about it.” Thus, as Ford states, “Surely the urgency of witness will measure the reality of our beliefs.”⁹²

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁹¹ Ibid., 17.

⁹² Ibid., 31.

TESTIMONIAL PREACHING: A METHOD TO COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL

It is mandated in the Word of God that God's people shall serve as witnesses of His saving grace. Verbal witness serves three purposes. (1) It is an evangelical ministry to unbelievers; (2) it is a strengthening ministry to Christians; and (3) it is an unifying ministry in an ecumenical age.⁹³ Both Old Testament and New Testament Scripture consistently refer to the people of God being called by God as His "witnesses."⁹⁴ The question then becomes how can we share our faith in a manner that will bring glory and honor to God through His Son, Christ Jesus? One answer to this question is we "use what we have."

Accordingly, every Christian has a testimony. A testimony tells of how Christ has saved someone and how He has continued to make life worthwhile. Here, in this course, our goal is to incorporate our personal faith stories when preaching biblical sermons. By doing so we will be attempting to participate in our command to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

⁹³ Neville, Joyce. *How to Share Your Faith Without Being Offensive*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979 at page 6.

⁹⁴ See Isaiah 43:10, 12; 44:8, Luke 24:48, Acts 1:8; 2:32; 10:39-43, 2 Timothy 1:8, Hebrew 12:1, Rev 6:9; 12:11, 19:10.

It has been said, “There are two great dangers to evangelism. One is to change the message; the other is to refuse to change the methods.”⁹⁵ Our aim in this course is to preach clear biblical messages that strategically include your personal testimony. Our goal of incorporating personal testimonies in sermons is a legitimate method for communicating Christ to the world.

THE POWER OF PERSONAL FAITH STORIES

The power of our personal testimonies should not be underestimated. Revelation 12:11 states, “And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” Thus, the world’s victory over Satan lays in the death and resurrection of Christ and in the believers’ faithful witness.

Harry Lee Poe, in his book Christian Witness in a Postmodern World, holds that the power of testimony lies in the fact that it tells a story. When Christians give their testimony, they tell their own story. The testimony has many advantages as a way of communicating the message of the Gospel in a way people are willing to hear. For instance, Poe states that a testimony is:

⁹⁵ Leighton Ford. *The Christian Persuader: The Urgency of Evangelism in Today's World*. Page 62.

Unique – No two people have the same testimony. That makes everyone's testimony special. The uniqueness of a testimony keeps it from boring people.

Identifiable – Despite the uniqueness of a testimony, people can identify with another person's experience. All people share the same basic needs and emotions. A testimony helps people see similarities of their own life with which they can identify. If Christ could help the one sharing the testimony, perhaps He will help the one who identifies with it. A testimony helps people see themselves clearly. What we could never admit about ourselves suddenly becomes clear when someone else says it about themselves.

Interesting – A testimony creates interest in the same way that gossip draws attention. A testimony contains the drama of life. It might not be dramatic in the sense Paul's experience on the Damascus road, but any story that comes from the heart has true drama.

Relevant – A testimony demonstrates that the Gospel of Jesus Christ still has meaning two thousand years after the Resurrection. In a personal testimony the contemporary truth of the Gospel shows itself. A testimony reveals what Jesus Christ means to someone one a day-to-day basis.

Personal – Unlike some methods of evangelism that rely on a canned approach, a testimony has a personal edge. The testimony comes from the heart of the person who shares it. They did not learn it from someone else.

Authoritative – The very nature of a testimony gives it authority. Because a testimony tells what we know of our own experience, no one can deny it. They may not believe it, but they cannot deny it. We are the final authority about what Christ has done for us.⁹⁶

A great cloud of witnesses is recorded in the Word of God who bears witness to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Consider Hannah's testimonial prayer in 1 Samuel Chapter 2 in which she tells of her personal encounter with God.⁹⁷

Consider the numerous accounts of David that are recorded in which

⁹⁶ Poe, Harry, Lee. *Christian Witness In A Postmodern*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001 at 136.

⁹⁷ “My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides You; there is no Rock like our God. Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by Him deeds are weighed. The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's upon them He has set the world. He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

he brings glory to the name of God through his words of prayer and song. Consider the testimony of John the Baptist and the effect it had when he declared, *“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God”*

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Consider the Samaritan woman who, after having an encounter with Jesus at the well, returns to the city and gives her testimony *“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”* The people respond to her testimony and made their way toward him. Finally the people conclude, *“This [Jesus] is truly the Savior of the world.”* Again, consider the testimony of the man that was born blind that Jesus healed. He stood before the relentless Pharisees and said, *“Whether he [Jesus] is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”* Consider the Apostle Paul’s testimony of how Jesus radically changed his life while traveling on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:12:18).

⁹⁸ John 1:32-34.

All of these Old and New Testament witnesses speak of their experiences with the God of yesterday, today, and forevermore. We must also strive to broadcast our testimonies. By doing so, we will be counted among the great cloud of witnesses that kept their charge to tell of their encounters with The Living God.

SESSION TWO

The instructor will continue this section by carrying out the main objectives of the course.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOAL # 2: Students will be better acquainted with one another and will feel secure in the classroom environment.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The instructor will ask each student to introduce his or herself to the class according to the following model.
2. Students will be given the opportunity to voice any questions or concerns

Name_____

(What do you prefer to be called?)_____

What church are you affiliated with? _____

What is your position _____ Pastor (How long?)

_____ Associate Minister (How long?)

_____ Minister in Training (When will
you be licensed?)

_____ Other (Explain)

Share one personal goal that you hope to achieve in
ministry _____

How often do you preach? _____

In what setting do you preach? _____

Are you from, or apart of a tradition that leaves time in its service for
believers to publicly give their testimony? _____ Yes _____ No

How often do you share your personal testimonies?

_____ Never _____ Occasionally _____ Very Often

What do you hope to gain from taking this class? _____

What do you hope to contribute to this class? _____

*“SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH TESTIMONIAL
PREACHING”*

SECTION II

WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA?

SESSION THREE & SESSION FOUR

OUTCOME: Students should be able to identify the single dominant idea (the “big idea”) of a biblical passage. This will help them with sharing personal testimonies that directly relate to the sermon idea.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOAL #1: The students should be able (1) to identify the subject of a unit of thought, (2) to identify the complement of a unit of thought, (3) to combine the subject and complement to form the “Big Idea.”

OBJECTIVES FOR IDENTIFYING THE SUBJECT:

1. Read a passage.
2. Determine the subject by asking the question “what is the passage talking about?”
3. Supply a full, precise answer to the question.

OBJECTIVES FOR IDENTIFYING THE COMPLEMENT:

1. Determine the complement by asking the question, “what is this passage saying about what it is talking about?,” to find information that completes the idea.
2. Supply a full, precise answer to the question.

OBJECTIVES FOR FORMING THE BIG IDEA

1. Combine the subject and complement(s) into a single sentence to form the “Big Idea.”

TEACHING STRATEGY: Lecture and Group Activities.

The following lecture notes have been constructed to help guide the instructor in carrying out the courses goals and objectives.

WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA?

Session Three

As we incorporate our personal faith stories in sermons, we are essentially telling a story within a story. The first story is derived from the biblical text. The second story that is weaved into the sermon is the personal faith story. According to John Walsh in The Art of Storytelling, there are three things to consider when telling a story within a story. First, there must be a relationship between the stories. Second, both stories must relate to the theme. Third, one story must illustrate a point within the other story.

Determining the main idea of the biblical text is a good place to begin the process. Once the main idea of the text is determined, one can consider a personal testimony that would complement an aspect of a key point that will be included in the sermon idea. Dr. Haddon W. Robinson in Biblical Preaching, offers an excellent guide for determining the “main idea,” or as he calls it, the “big idea” of the text.

Dr. Robinson states “everything in the sermons either leads up to, develops, or follows from a single unifying theme.”⁹⁹ Robinson further states that “ideally each sermon is the explanation, interpretation, or application of a single dominant idea supported by other ideas, all drawn from one passage or several passages of Scripture.”¹⁰⁰

Using Dr. Robinson’s book Biblical Preaching as a guide we know that an idea has two essential elements: a subject and a complement. To determine the subject of a passage of Scripture we ask the question, “What is the author talking about? The complement completes the subject by answering the question “What is the author saying about what he is talking about?”

⁹⁹ Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980 at 38.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 35.

End of Session Three.

WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA?

Session Four

Let us review some of the examples that are found in Biblical Preaching as a practice exercise.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹See Biblical Preaching pages 43-50.

*“SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH TESTIMONIAL
PREACHING”*

SECTION III

TECHNIQUES FOR SHARING FAITH STORIES

SESSION FIVE & SESSION SIX

INSTRUCTIONAL GOAL # 1: By the end of this section the student should be able to identify the various methods for sharing faith stories that were taught and then apply them as they prepare and deliver their personal testimony as assigned by the instructor.

TEACHING STRATEGY: Lecture and Handout Notes.

The instructor will give a lecture entitled “Techniques for Sharing Faith Stories.” Afterwards, the students will prepare and deliver a 10-minute personal testimony that will be evaluated by the class.

The students will also prepare and deliver a 20-25 minute sermon in which they incorporate their personal testimony that will be evaluated by the class.

TECHNICQUES FOR SHARING FAITH STORIES

Session Five

4 Things To Consider For Getting Off To a Good Start

1. LOVE

Love is a prerequisite to testifying.

Scripture Reference-

See *1 Corinthians 13* for “The Way of Love”

When love witnesses, it does not seek to make people over, nor to dictate behavior. With quiet confidence, Love speaks of her Beloved (Christ) and of her security and her trust in Him.¹⁰²

2. **PRAYER**

When preparing your testimony, seek-out the Holy Spirit in prayer to lead and guide you. Joyce Neville in How to Share Your Faith
Without Being Offensive states:

The Holy Spirit opens the other person to Christ’s touch if He guides us to speak in His name. Whether or not we seem to get a response, we have obeyed God and planted a spiritual seed. Obedience is our responsibility; results are God’s responsibility. Dean Hall said, ‘When you get ready to tell...others about God’s activities in your life, the Holy Spirit not only goes with you, He goes before you. When you are led to speak to of these things to a person, you will not be, as a salesman would call it, working ‘cold turkey.’ The Holy Spirit will have been at work in the heart and mind of the one to whom you are led to speak, the soil will have been prepared in some measure for the seed which you are ready to plant.¹⁰³

Scripture Reference-

¹⁰² Rinker, Rosalind. *You Can Witness With Confidence*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House (1962), at page 37.

¹⁰³ Neville, Joyce, *How To Share Your Faith Without Being Offensive*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.

*Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.*¹⁰⁴

3. PUT ON YOUR OWN GEAR

As you make yourself available to the moving of the Holy Spirit, also tap into the uniqueness of your personality. There is something that God specifically gave you that is genuine that will allow you to accomplish His will. It may be a humble, bold, or even a cool, calm and collected spirit. You may be a naturally funny person. Always remember to be yourself and do not be afraid to use what God has given you when you share your testimony.

Scripture References-

(First Scripture Reference)

*Saul said to David, ‘Go and the LORD be with you.’ Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. ‘I cannot go in these,’ he said to Saul, ‘because I am not used to them.’ So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.*¹⁰⁵
(Second Scripture Reference)

*But by the grace of GOD I am what I am.*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Philippians 4:6.

¹⁰⁵ 1 Samuel 17:37-40

¹⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:10.

4. TELL THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, SO HELP YOU GOD!

A Word of Caution: Always keep in mind that testimonies are True Stories. When giving your testimony do not enlarge any facts or statements beyond what is actual or true.

Scripture Reference-

*Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.*¹⁰⁷

DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

“A *Christian testimony* is a true story of God’s action in one’s personal life or an account of what being a Christian means in a personal way. A Christian testimony “may be told in a few words or many. It may include background information relevant to the circumstances of the experience.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:2.

¹⁰⁸ Joyce Neville. *How To Share Your Faith Without Being Offensive*. Page 10.

THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY SHOULD BE
TO:¹⁰⁹

1. Glorify God,
2. to Edify the Church,
3. and to Deepen the Faith of Believers.

CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY SHOULD NOT:¹¹⁰

1. Serve to Exalt the Person who is Testifying.
2. Divulge Unnecessary Details about Personal Life.
3. Cross the line into Admonition and Chastising.
4. Embarrass other Persons.
5. Tear Down rather than Edify the Church.

Break

¹⁰⁹ Taken from the *Questionnaire Response* of Dr. William C. Turner; Professor of Homiletics, Duke Divinity School.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

CHOOSING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Session Six

1. When you tell a story within a story, there must be a logical relationship between the stories. Thus, some aspect of the sermon text must relate to the personal testimony.
2. Consider your audience to determine what aspects of your personal testimony will be appropriate to share in light of their age, gender, cultural background, economic status, etc.
3. Follow God's leading. God is the one that guides you through the process, and He is the only one that can do the work. Keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to honor God by sharing your personal faith story in the spirit of love.

PREPARING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

1. Your personal testimony should be Christ-centered.

According to Duane Liftin in Public Speaking: A Handbook For Christians, "When we prepare a personal testimony, we must be sure that it is Christ-centered. It should be designed to praise and honor Him above all. It is not difficult for testimonies to become

self-centered, focusing mainly upon ourselves, our feelings, our responses. Though most testimonies will contain some of this, the main object of the speech ought to be to lift up Christ, to show His grace, His mercy, and His love as demonstrated in our life.”¹¹¹

2. A good testimony will usually, but not always, have four points

These four points are an Introduction, Crisis, Climax, and

Resolution.¹¹²

◆ Introduction – Set the stage in the introduction. Give some background to your experience with Christ. In a conversion testimony, describe your life before you became a Christian. In a testimony about how Christ helped your life, describe your situation before the crisis developed which you need help.

◆ Crisis – the drama builds as you describe how a crisis grew in your life. In a conversion testimony, describe how you realized that you needed to be saved. In a testimony about how Christ has helped you, describe the crisis that led you to lean on the Lord.

◆ Climax – The critical moment of the testimony comes with the climax. God does something. In a testimony, the Lord is always

¹¹¹ Ibid., 336.

¹¹² Harry Poe, *Christian Witness In A Postmodern World*. 2001.

the hero who rescues us. In a conversion testimony, describe how the Lord saved you. Did someone lead you to Him? Did it happen during a revival? How did you feel? How did you turn to Him? In a testimony about how He has helped you, describe what He did about the problem that you faced. How did you know the Lord had helped you? Did you ask Him for help?

◆ Resolution – The resolution tells what life has been like as a result of what the Lord did. In a conversion testimony, tell what difference the Lord has made in your life. In a testimony about what the Lord has done for you, tell how salvation means something every day. Describe what it means to know the Lord loves you and cares for you, even when you do not ask.

**SOME ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN
PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY:**¹¹³

The sequence of events of the story is maintained by Action, Suspense, Directness, and Climax.

¹¹³ Emerson, Laura S. *The Art of Storytelling*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959.

Action – After you begin, keep the action moving in a series of connected incidents. Each episode should contribute something to the following one until the climax is reached.

Suspense – Capitalize on the surprise element throughout the whole story. Picture just enough hazards to keep the listeners waiting and wondering how the story turn out.

Directness – Keep the story progressing without side trips or episodes. Do not go overboard with the details. Eliminate unnecessary details that do not add anything to the story.

Climax – Stop at the top. Do not go beyond the ending. After the high pinnacle of the climax, there is little left to tell. Often, the climax and the ending are the same. Consider the following two points in reference to the ending or climax:

-Be sure to account for all the characters in your story.

-Do not add a teaching point as an aftermath. Weave the significance of the testimony into the body of the testimony. “The well-told story leads the listener to think within himself.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 52.

*Laura Emerson in Storytelling suggests studying story endings for models of completion.

ESTABLISH THE STORY'S ONE CENTRAL TRUTH

Duane Litfin in Public Speaking: A Handbook For Christians states, “Even a personal testimony needs the unity, order, and progress that a central idea contributes.”¹¹⁵ Thus, our goal is to determine the central idea in the faith story that we want to communicate to our listeners.

John Walsh in The Art of Storytelling states that there are three questions that need to be asked in order to determine the central idea or central truth of a story. The three questions are as follows:

1. What one truth do I want to communicate to my listeners?
2. Why would I take the time to tell this story?
3. Why is it important?

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 336.

The answer to these questions becomes the theme. The theme “influences the flow of the story. The story does its job even as [you] walk away.”¹¹⁶

According to Walsh, your central theme is best if it is specific. He states,

Rather than choosing a theme that says, We need to have more faith in God,” “Trust God at all times,” or “Endure hardships,” change these statements so they tell what Noah’s faith did for him, or what was involved in trusting, or how endurance changed Noah. Good themes will sound more like:

*Faith that ran contrary to experience
Learning to trust while being confused
Endurance turns frustration into faith*¹¹⁷

FIND A MEMORY HOOK

John Walsh further states in *The Art of Storytelling* that one should include a memory hook when telling a story because “...sometimes a memory hook helps people remember the theme.”¹¹⁸

According to Walsh, a memory hook is a phrase, song, concept, or attitude repeated throughout the story.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 48.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 50.

It is important to note that Walsh states that a memory hook is not the theme but a memory helper. The memory hook needs to fit the story. It is not enough to repeat a phrase. The memory hook should do one of the following:

- Relate to a quality trait of the main character
- Reinforce the underlying plot
- Emphasize the theme

STIMULATE THE LISTENERS' FIVE SENSES

According to John Walsh in the Art of Storytelling, in order to draw the listeners into the story, you need to stimulate the listeners' five senses. He states "there should be enough description so the audience will see, hear, taste, smell, and feel everything going on."¹¹⁹ According to Walsh,

Description is not factual information. It is feelings and emotions that help the listener enter the world of the story. It is taking an ordinary action statement and expanding it. Description transforms statements of fact into exciting life experiences.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 71.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 71.

3 DELIVERY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Be Yourself – let your natural personality shine through as you give your testimony.
2. Make Good Uses of Pauses – Haddon W. Robinson in Biblical Preaching says, “Pauses are thoughtful silences. They go beyond a stoppage in speech and give the audience a brief opportunity to think, feel, and respond.”¹²¹
3. Use Your Voice To The Fullest Extent – Duane Litfin in Public Speaking, states “In order to be an effective speaker, you need to use as much vocal range as possible. Why? Because a variety of intonation and inflection gives color, texture, and meaning to your words.”¹²²

PRACTICE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

- ◆ Review the methods discussed in class.
- ◆ Write out your testimony.
- ◆ Practice your testimony.

¹²¹ Ibid., 206.

¹²² Ibid., 325.

TECHNIQUES FOR SHARING FAITH STORIES

STUDENT HANDOUT # 2

SESSION FIVE & SESSION SIX

4 Things To Consider For Getting Off To A Good Start

1. LOVE

_____ is a prerequisite to testifying.

Scripture Reference-

See 1 Corinthians 13 for “*The Way of Love*”

“When love witnesses, it does not seek to _____
_____, nor to _____. With quiet
confidence, Love speaks of her Beloved (Christ) and of her security
and her trust in Him.”¹²³

2. PRAYER

When preparing your testimony, _____-_____ the Holy
Spirit in prayer to lead and guide you.

¹²³ Rosalind Rinker. *You Can Witness with Confidence*. Page 37.

Scripture Reference-

*Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.*¹²⁴

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As you make yourself available to the moving of the Holy Spirit, also tap into the uniqueness of your personality. There is something that God specifically gave you that is genuine that will allow you to accomplish His will. It may be a humble, bold, or even a cool, calm and collected spirit. You may be a naturally funny person. Always remember to _____ and do not be afraid to use what God has given you when you share your testimony.

Scripture References-

(First Scripture Reference)

*Saul said to David, 'Go and the LORD be with you.' Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. 'I cannot go in these,' he said to Saul, 'because I am not used to them.' So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.*¹²⁵

¹²⁴Philippians 4:6.

¹²⁵ 1 Samuel 17:37-40.

(Second Scripture Reference)

But by the grace of GOD I am what I am.¹²⁶

4. TELL THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, SO HELP YOU GOD!

A Word of Caution: Always keep in mind that testimonies are ______. When giving your testimony do not enlarge any facts or statements beyond what is actual or true.

Scripture Reference-

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.¹²⁷

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“A _____ is a _____
_____ of God’s action in one’s personal life or an account
of what being a Christian means in a personal way. A Christian
testimony “may be told in a _____ or many. It may

¹²⁶I Corinthians 15:10.

¹²⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:10.

include _____ relevant to the circumstances of the experience.”¹²⁸

THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY SHOULD BE

TO:¹²⁹

1. _____ God,
2. to _____ the Church,
3. and to Deepen the Faith of Believers.

CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY SHOULD NOT:¹³⁰

1. Serve to Exalt the Person who is Testifying.
2. Divulge Unnecessary Details about Personal Life.
3. Cross the line into Admonition and Chastising.
4. Embarrass other Persons.
5. Tear Down rather than Edify the Church.

¹²⁸ Joyce Neville. *How To Share Your Faith Without Being Offensive*. Page 10.

¹²⁹ Taken from the *Questionnaire Response* of Dr. William C. Turner; Professor of Homiletics, Duke Divinity School.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Session Six

CHOOSING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

1. When you tell a story within a story, there must be a _____ between the stories. Thus, some aspect of the sermon text must relate to the personal testimony.
2. Consider your audience to determine what aspects of your personal testimony will be appropriate to share in light of their age, gender, cultural background, economic status, etc.
3. Follow God's leading. God is the one that guides you through the process, and He is the _____ one that can do the work. Keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to honor God by sharing your personal faith story in the spirit of love.

PREPARING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

1. Your personal testimony should be _____-centered.

2. A good testimony will usually, but not always, have four points

These four points are an Introduction, Crisis, Climax, and

Resolution.¹³¹

- ◆ Introduction – “Set the stage in the introduction. Give some background to your experience with Christ.”

Notes_____

- ◆ Crisis – “the drama builds as you describe how a crisis grew in your life.”

Notes_____

- ◆ Climax – “In a testimony, the Lord is always the hero who rescues us.”

Notes_____

¹³¹ Harry Lee Poe. *Christian Witness In A Postmodern World*, 2001.

- ◆ Resolution – “The resolution tells what life has been like as a result of what the Lord did.”

Notes _____

SOME ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN
PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY:¹³²

The sequence of events of the story is maintained
by _____, _____, _____, and
_____.

¹³² Emerson, Laura S. *The Art of Storytelling*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959.

Action – After you begin, keep the action moving in a series of connected incidents. Each episode should contribute something to the following one until the _____ is reached.

Suspense – Capitalize on the surprise element throughout the whole story.

Directness – Keep the story progressing without side trips or episodes.

Do not go overboard with the details. _____ unnecessary details that do not add anything to the story.

Climax – Stop at the top. Do not go beyond the ending.

-Be sure to account for _____ the characters.

-Do not _____ a teaching point as an aftermath. Weave the significance of the testimony into the body of the testimony.

“The well-told story leads the listener to think within himself.”¹³³

¹³³ Ibid., 52.

*Laura Emerson in Storytelling suggests studying story endings for models of completion.

ESTABLISH THE STORY'S ONE CENTRAL TRUTH

Our goal is to determine the _____ in the faith story that we want to communicate to our listeners.

John Walsh in The Art of Storytelling states that there are three questions that need to be asked in order to determine the central idea or central truth of a story. The three questions are as follows:

1. What one truth do I want to communicate to my listeners?
2. Why would I take the time to tell this story?
3. Why is it important?

FIND A MEMORY HOOK

According to Walsh, a memory hook is a phrase, song, concept, or attitude repeated throughout the story.

The memory hook should do one of the following:

- Relate to a quality trait of the main character
- Reinforce the underlying plot
- Emphasize the theme

Notes _____

STIMULATE THE LISTENERS' FIVE SENSES

In order to draw the listeners into the story, you need to stimulate the listeners' five senses. There should be enough description so the audience will _____, _____, _____, smell, and feel everything going on.

3 DELIVERY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Be Yourself –

2. Make Good Uses of Pauses –

3. Use Your Voice To The Fullest Extent –

PRACTICE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

- ◆ Review the methods discussed in class.
- ◆ Write out your testimony.
- ◆ Practice your testimony.

*“SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH TESTIONIAL
PREACHING”*

SECTION IV

SHARING FAITH STORIES

SESSION SEVEN & SESSION EIGHT

INSTRUCTIONAL GOAL # 1: The students will deliver a 10-minute Christian testimonial that includes various aspects of the methods that have been taught in this course.

OBJECTIVE: The instructor and students will provide written and oral feedback of each personal testimony.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY EVALUATION FORM

STUDENT HANDOUT # 3

SESSION SEVEN & SESSION EIGHT

Name of Person Giving Testimony

1. Does the testimony have a central theme?

Yes No

2. What is the central theme that is communicated in the testimony?

3. Does the testimony have a memory hook that reinforces the underlying theme? If so, please state it.

4. Was the testimony well developed? (Introduction, Crisis, Climax, and Resolution).

Yes No

5. How would you rate the preacher's ability to stimulate the listener's five senses (see, hear, taste, smell, feel) when giving personal testimony?

See

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Hear

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Taste

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Smell

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Feel

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

6. Did the preacher make good uses of pauses?

Yes No

7. Did the preacher use his or her voice to the fullest extent?

(Check all that apply)

Good use of pitch and tone Too loud

Not loud enough Too fast

Too slow Would not change a thing

*“SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH TESTIMONIAL
PREACHING”*

SECTION V

**INCORPORATING FAITH STORIES WITHIN
SERMONS**

SESSION NINE & SESSION TEN

INSTRUCTIONAL GOAL #1: The students will deliver a 20-25 minute sermon in which they incorporate a personal faith story. The students will also be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and give feedback for future classes on this subject.

OBJECTIVE: The instructor and students will provide written and oral feedback of each sermon. The students will also fill out a course evaluation form.

SERMON EVALUATION FORM

STUDENT HANDOUT #4

SESSION NINE AND SESSION TEN

Incorporating Personal Testimony Within A Sermon

Name of Person Preaching

1. Does the testimony have a central theme?

Yes No

2. What is the central theme that is communicated in the testimony?

3. Does the testimony have a memory hook that reinforces the underlying theme? If so, please state it.

4. Is there a clear relationship between the sermon idea and the personal testimony?

Yes _____ No _____

5. How would you rate the preacher's transition from the sermon text to introducing personal testimony in the sermon?

_____ Poor _____ Good _____ Very Good _____ Excellent

6. Was the testimony well developed? (Introduction, Crisis, Climax, and Resolution).

_____ Yes _____ No

7. How would you rate the preacher's ability to stimulate the listener's five senses (see, hear, taste, smell, feel) when giving personal testimony?

See

_____ Poor _____ Good _____ Very Good _____ Excellent

Hear

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Taste

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Smell

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Feel

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

8. Did the preacher make good uses of pauses?

Yes No

9. Did the preacher use his or her voice to the fullest extent?

(Check all that apply)

Good use of pitch and tone Too loud

Not loud enough Too fast

Too slow Would not change a thing

COURSE EVALUATION

STUDENT HANDOUT #5

SESSION TEN

1. How would you rate this course overall?

1

2

3

4

5

Not Very Helpful

OK

Very Helpful

2. What did you find of the greatest value in our class?

(Put a check (✓) to indicate your response)

Lecture

Class Discussion

Handout Notes

Assigned Readings

Practice Testimony Practice Preaching

3. What did you find of the least value in our class?

(Put a check (✓) to indicate your response)

Lecture

Class Discussion

Handout Notes

Assigned Readings

Practice Testimony Practice Preaching

4. Why is it important that we share our testimonies?

5. How enthusiastic are you about using the concepts of the course in the near future?

Not At All

Somewhat

Fairly

Extremely

6. Do you think your preaching will be more relevant as a result of taking this course?

Yes

No

The Same

7. Was the class environment good for learning?

Yes

No

8. What was the most helpful idea or skill you learned in this class?

9. Did any sessions stand out in a positive or negative way? (if so, which ones?)

10. If you had to teach this course, is there anything you would change?

11. How would you rate the instructor?

1 2 3 4 5

Not Effective

Average

Very Effective

12. Overall, do you agree or disagree with the feedback you received from your testimony evaluations and preaching evaluations.

 Agree Disagree

Please explain

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and evaluate the first time that I presented a portion of this thesis-project. This chapter is divided into four sections, the first section discusses my teaching experience, the second section discusses the students' experience, the third section gives a final assessment of the course, and the last section offers suggestions to those who would teach this course in the future.

A small group was formed and I taught Section One, and Section Three. Section One of this course is entitled, "Testimonial Preaching: A Method to Communicate the Gospel." Section Two is entitled, "Techniques for Sharing Faith Stories." I selected these two sections because they are among my least tested areas.

This course was offered to 3 clergy, an ordained deacon, a deaconess, and a layperson who is involved in missions. This was a one-day class that met for approximately 4 hours. Because the sections that were presented focused more on sharing personal

testimony as opposed to preaching, every member of the class could find this course relevant to their particular call to ministry.

At the conclusion of the class each student was asked to complete a written course evaluation form. After completing their written course evaluations, students also made comments concerning their experience in an open forum. In addition, throughout the entire process I reflected on various aspects of my experience for evaluative purposes.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

I always believed that I would have a positive teaching experience in which the material that I presented would allow each student's relationship with Christ to be strengthened and his or her ministry would be more relevant. However, my teaching experience exceeded my expectations. I give God all the glory for all that was accomplished as written in the spirit of Ephesians 3:20, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

GETTING READY TO TEACH

Prior to teaching the class I reviewed Section One and Section Three teaching notes and student handouts. I prayed that the Holy Spirit would guide me and God’s will be accomplished. I prayed for myself as well as each individual attending the class.

Interestingly, although I felt led to strictly follow Section Three lecture notes and student handouts entitled “Strategies for Sharing Faith Stories,” I did not feel led to strictly follow the outline and lecture notes that I prepared for Section One “Testimonial Preaching: A method to communicate the Gospel.”

Section One introduces the problem, which is an urgency to spread the Gospel. Section One illustrates the power of personal faith stories and argues that incorporating faith stories in sermons is a legitimate means for an effective witness of Jesus Christ. The lecture notes that I had previously prepared spend more time in its introduction on the believer’s attitude towards “the lost.” I think that the introduction is an appropriate model but it was not fitting for this particular setting. After prayer, I felt very led to focus more in my introduction on the believer’s call to serve as witnesses. The believer’s call to serve as witnesses was already a subtopic that is included in this section, but it came in a later discussion. Thus, I rearranged the order in which I introduced the course. The

following contains the “Introduction of the Course” portion of the outline as listed in Chapter Four of this thesis-project as well as the revised outline that I followed during this teaching experience.

III. Introduction to the Course (Original Outline)

- A. Urgency to Spread the Gospel
- B. A Method to Communicate the Gospel.
- C. Call to Testify.

III. Introduction to the Course (Revised Outline)

- A. Call to Testify.
- B. Urgency to Spread the Gospel.
- C. A Method to Communicate the Gospel.

In addition to rearranging the order of the outline, I also felt led to emphasize several passages of Scriptures that were included in Chapter Two of this thesis but were not included in Session One of my teaching notes. These passages of Scripture lay the foundation for the believer’s call to serve as witnesses. My original lecture notes includes passages of Scripture to this effect, however I felt that this group would benefit from me incorporating several more Scripture passages. Thus, the following is a list of Scripture passage that I added to my lecture:

Isaiah 43:10-13

Deuteronomy 7: 7-8

Acts 1:8

Matthew 28:18-20

2 Timothy 1

CLASS IS IN SESSION

There were several preparations that had to be made before the class actually came together as a group. To name a few, I had to review my material, I had to make several photocopies of the material for the students, I had to set up the classroom, and I had to make proper arrangements for lunch that was served after the course.

To say the least I was feeling a bit stretched once the class started.

According to the original course outline the instructor leads the class in devotion. I decided to make a slight change in the original outline. I decided to ask one of the students with pastoral experience to lead the class in devotion. He led us in song and prayer. We sang the song “There is a Name I Love to Hear.” Afterwards he asked the class to hold hands in a circle and he prayed a moving prayer that lifted our burdens and allowed us to feel the presence of Almighty God. I was so filled with God’s Spirit. I can remember thinking “thanks I needed that!”

Session One and Session Three went well. I am so glad that I was led to give the class additional Scripture references that relate to their call to serve as witnesses in Session One. The class was very interested in this aspect of the class. This served as a motivational factor for all that were present. I could see the Holy Spirit at work stirring up each person and allowing us to see our call to serve in a refreshing new way. Each student was convinced from the lecture that they were called to serve as witnesses, that there is an urgent need to spread the Gospel, and sharing personal faith stories was a means to evangelize to this present generation.

The student introductions went well. I gave the students the student introduction model to follow, but I informed them that they could feel free to add any remarks that they wanted to share. Interestingly, all but one student gave a personal testimony of God's actions in their life as part of introducing themselves to the class. This was not a part of the "planned" agenda. This was an awesome addition because the students engaged in the subject matter before any "strategies" for giving personal testimony were given. Each testimony was pure and I believe every person felt God's presence as He was given glory and honor. When I introduced the "Strategies for Sharing Personal Faith Stories," I informed the students that these strategies should never compromise the authenticity of their

testimony. These strategies are given to enhance how they tell their personal faith stories for the glory of God.

The lecture notes and student handout in Session Three, “Strategies for Sharing Personal Testimonies” went well. The lecture notes were clear and easy to follow along with the student handout. The student handout was student-friendly. It was rewarding watching the students take notes on the handouts as they provided space to do so. It was also rewarding watching the students to be able to fill-in the blanks on their handouts with ease.

Thus, Session Three went well. I felt that the information that was being presented was valuable and the students were very interested in learning about the subject matter. During the entire class I felt led to pray within myself. I also felt led to take my time with presenting the material.

CONCLUDING THE COURSE

The course concluded with prayer, course evaluations, and lunch. Overall, the course evaluation portion went well. The students understood the importance of this aspect of the class and carefully responded to the questions. There are, however, two things that I would do differently in the future. First, I will read over each question to make sure the students understand what they are being

asked. Question 2 proved to be somewhat complicated and unclear. I decided to rewrite this question and break it up into two questions. The following illustrates Question 2 as written in its original form, and then the revised version.

Question # 2 (Original Version)

Question # 2. What did you find of the greatest value in our class?
(Number 1 through 8; with 1 being the most and 8 least value).

Lecture Class Discussion
 Handout Notes Assigned Readings
 Practice Testimony Practice Preaching

Question # 2 (Revised Version Includes Question 2 & Question 3)

2. What did you find of the greatest value in our class? (Put a check (✓) to indicate your response).

Lecture Class Discussion
 Handout Notes Assigned Readings
 Practice Testimony Practice Preaching

3. What did you find of the least value in our class? (Please put a check (✓) to indicate your response).

Lecture Class Discussion
 Handout Notes Assigned Readings
 Practice Testimony Practice Preaching

A SUMMARY OF THE COURSE EVALUATION FORMS AND OTHER COMMENTS MADE BY STUDENTS

It was a great pleasure presenting the material to this class.

Each student is serious about their relationship with the Lord and is eager to learn.

1. All the students state that the course was very helpful.

2. All the students felt that the lecture and handouts were of the greatest value in our class. In addition, half the class says that the class discussion should also be included along with the lecture and handouts as being of greatest value in our class.

3. Based on the responses, the entire class had a clear understanding of why we share our testimonies.

4. The entire class said that they are enthusiastic about using the concepts of the course in the near future. I had a couple of students contact me the next day still expressing their enthusiasm for what was shared in the class. One student was so excited that he shared what he learned with his wife that evening.

5. All of the preachers present said they think that their preaching will be more relevant as a result of taking this course.

6. All of the students say that the class environment was good for learning. One student expressed however that she was somewhat frustrated when other students made comments that seemed to be outside of the scope of the topic.

7. There was a lot of material covered in this particular class.

When asked what was the most helpful idea or skill learned the students responded as following:

- ◆ Be yourself and take your time.
- ◆ How to deliver my testimony.

- ◆ Love.
- ◆ Testimony should be relevant to the situation and not self-gratifying.

8. All of the students stated that all of the sessions were positive. A couple of students said that the Scripture-based part was particularly important / positive as well as the discussion of being logical with your progression of events.

9. All but one of the students said that they would not change anything if they had to teach this course. One student commented he would adjust it to his personal style of teaching.

10. All of the students would rate me as the instructor as being “very effective.”

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF THE COURSE

I was extremely pleased with the outcome of the course. The lecture notes proved to be very thorough as well as motivating. In addition, the student introduction model was helpful in initiating

conversation among the class. The model allowed everyone to be better acquainted with one another and it allowed the students to feel secure in the classroom environment.

Furthermore, the student handout entitled “Strategies for Sharing Faith Stories” was effective for several reasons. First, the fact that the students were able to write notes allowed them to preserve valuable thoughts that they otherwise might have lost. The fill-in the blank portion allowed for active listening learning, which is an excellent memory aid. Lastly, the student handout “Strategies for Sharing Faith Stories” is material that the students can take with them and continue to review beyond the classroom setting. One of my intentions for this course was that the students continually practice what they have learned.

Moreover, spontaneous class discussions proved to be very beneficial. Among the most beneficial was students sharing personal testimonies in their introductions. Another was when students discussed how sharing personal testimonies have impacted them.

The Lord certainly exceeded my expectations in allowing this project to be a theological work that is beneficial for equipping men and women in their service. The overall experience was Spirit-led and Spirit-filled. We began the class with praise and prayer. To say

the least, we were not disappointed. It was as if we experienced a revival. During the course of the class, the Spirit spoke to each of us individually as well as corporately through the material that was presented. Interestingly, I thought that the students were the only ones that would receive a blessing from the material because I had become so familiar with it. I received beyond what I had already experienced.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE IN THE FUTURE

There are a few suggestions that I would offer for those who will teach this course in the future. First beginning the class with singing songs and prayer allows the class to move away from the “cares of this world” and nearer to God. Next, pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you in how to begin the course. There are three sections included in Session One that introduces the course. These sections can be re-arranged in a way that meets the students’ most pressing need. Again, in this teaching experience I felt led to begin with “Call to Testify” as opposed to “Urgency to Spread to Spread the Gospel.” Someone else might feel led to begin with a completely different session.

Another suggestion is do not restrict yourself to personally carrying out all of the duties that are set forth in each lesson plan. Although I give a model in which the instructor leads the class in devotion, etc., feel free to delegate duties to the students. I decided before the class had began to ask a student with pastoral experience to lead devotion because I was feeling a bit stretched as a result of engaging in pre-class preparations.

Moreover, I would suggest that every instructor read and reflect on Chapter Two before teaching this class. Chapter Two lays the theological foundation for Christian testimonies as set forth in the Word of God. In addition, at the conclusion of the course take time to go over each question of the course evaluation form in case the students need an explanation or have questions. An explanation of other forms, such as the sermon evaluation forms, is also recommended.

APPENDIX

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE: TECHNIQUES FOR SHARING

FAITH STORIES

Answers To Student Handout #2

4 Things To Consider For Getting Off To A Good Start

1. LOVE

Love is a prerequisite to testifying.

Scripture Reference-

See 1 Corinthians 13 for “*The Way of Love*”

When love witnesses, it does not seek to make people over, nor to dictate behavior. With quiet confidence, Love speaks of her Beloved (Christ) and of her security and her trust in Him.¹³⁴

2. PRAYER

When preparing your testimony, seek- out the Holy Spirit in prayer to lead and guide you.

Scripture Reference-

¹³⁴ Rosalind Rinker. *You Can Witness with Confidence*. Page 37.

*Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.*¹³⁵

3. WEAR YOUR OWN GEAR

As you make yourself available to the moving of the Holy Spirit, also tap into the uniqueness of your personality. There is something that God specifically gave you that is genuine that will allow you to accomplish His will. It may be a humble, bold, or even a cool, calm and collected spirit. You may be a naturally funny person. Always remember to be yourself and do not be afraid to use what God has given you when you share your testimony.

Scripture References-

(First Scripture Reference)

*Saul said to David, ‘Go and the LORD be with you.’ Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. ‘I cannot go in these,’ he said to Saul, ‘because I am not used to them.’ So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.*¹³⁶

(Second Scripture Reference)

*But by the grace of GOD I am what I am.*¹³⁷

¹³⁵Philippians 4:10.

¹³⁶1 Samuel 17:37-40.

¹³⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:10.

4. TELL THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, SO HELP YOU GOD!

A Word of Caution: Always keep in mind that testimonies are true stories. When giving your testimony do not enlarge any facts or statements beyond what is actual or true.

Scripture Reference-

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.¹³⁸

DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

“A Christian Testimony is a true story of God’s action in one’s personal life or an account of what being a Christian means in a personal way. A Christian testimony “may be told in a few words or many. It may include background information relevant to the circumstances of the experience.”¹³⁹

¹³⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:2.

¹³⁹ Joyce Neville. *How To Share Your Faith Without Being Offensive*. Page 10.

THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY SHOULD BE

TO:¹⁴⁰

1. Glorify God,
2. to Edify the Church,
3. and to Deepen the Faith of Believers.

CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY SHOULD NOT:¹⁴¹

1. Serve to Exalt the Person who is Testifying.
2. Divulge Unnecessary Details about Personal Life.
3. Cross the line into Admonition and Chastising.
4. Embarrass other Persons.
5. Tear Down rather than Edify the Church.

¹⁴⁰ Taken from the *Questionnaire Response* of Dr. William C. Turner; Professor of Homiletics, Duke Divinity Schools

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Session Six

CHOOSING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

1. When you tell a story within a story, there must be a logical relationship between the stories. Thus, some aspect of the sermon text must relate to the personal testimony.
2. Consider your audience to determine what aspects of your personal testimony will be appropriate to share in light of their age, gender, cultural background, economic status, etc.
3. Follow God's leading. God is the one that guides you through the process, and He is the only one that can do the work. Keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to honor God by sharing your personal faith story in the spirit of love.

PREPARING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

1. Your personal testimony should be Christ- centered.

2. A good testimony will usually, but not always, have four points

These four points are an Introduction, Crisis, Climax, and

Resolution.¹⁴²

- ◆ Introduction – “Set the stage in the introduction. Give some background to your experience with Christ.”

Notes_____

- ◆ Crisis – “the drama builds as you describe how a crisis grew in your life.”

Notes_____

- ◆ Climax – “In a testimony, the Lord is always the hero who rescues us.”

¹⁴² Harry Lee Poe. *Christian Witness In A Postmodern World*, 2001.

Notes _____

- ◆ Resolution – “The resolution tells what life has been like as a result of what the Lord did.”

Notes _____

SOME ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN
PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY:¹⁴³

The sequence of events of the story is maintained by Action,
Suspense, Directness, and Climax.

¹⁴³ Emerson, Laura S. *The Art of Storytelling*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959.

Action – After you begin, keep the action moving in a series of connected incidents. Each episode should contribute something to the following one until the Climax is reached.

Suspense – Capitalize on the surprise element throughout the whole story.

Directness – Keep the story progressing without side trips or episodes.

Do not go overboard with the details. Eliminate unnecessary details that do not add anything to the story.

Climax – Stop at the top. Do not go beyond the ending.

-Be sure to account for all the characters.

-Do not add a teaching point as an aftermath. Weave the significance of the testimony into the body of the testimony. “The well-told story leads the listener to think within himself.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 52.

*Laura Emerson in Storytelling suggests studying story endings for models of completion.

ESTABLISH THE STORY'S ONE CENTRAL TRUTH

Our goal is to determine the Central Idea in the faith story that we want to communicate to our listeners.

John Walsh in The Art of Storytelling states that there are three questions that need to be asked in order to determine the central idea or central truth of a story. The three questions are as follows:

1. What one truth do I want to communicate to my listeners?
2. Why would I take the time to tell this story?
3. Why is it important?

FIND A MEMORY HOOK

According to Walsh, a memory hook is a phrase, song, concept, or attitude repeated throughout the story.

The memory hook should do one of the following:

- Relate to a quality trait of the main character
- Reinforce the underlying plot
- Emphasize the theme

Notes _____

STIMULATE THE LISTENERS' FIVE SENSES

In order to draw the listeners into the story, you need to stimulate the listeners' five senses. There should be enough description so the audience will See, Hear, Taste, Smell, and Feel everything going on.

3 DELIVERY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Be Yourself –

2. Make Good Uses of Pauses –

3. Use Your Voice To The Fullest Extent –

PRACTICE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

- ◆ Review the methods discussed in class.
- ◆ Write out your testimony.
- ◆ Practice your testimony.

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VITA

Rev. Christine Wright was born on January 17, 1970 in Hartford, Connecticut. She is the youngest of seven children born to Deacon Jimmie and Deaconess Ethel Wright. She was baptized at the age of six at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Hartford, Connecticut.

Rev. Wright was licensed to preach the Gospel at Baptist Grove Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1997. She was the first woman to be ordained into the Gospel ministry at Baptist Grove Church on September 14, 2003. Rev. Wright earned degrees from Saint Augustine's College, North Carolina Central University School of Law, and Duke University School of Divinity. Rev. Wright began her Doctor of Ministry studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in March 2004 and her expected graduation date is May of 2007.

Rev. Wright comes from a tradition that sets time aside in its service for believers to publicly give personal testimony. Rev. Wright believes that sharing personal testimonies is a valuable practice that is worth preserving.

